

A
DEFENCE
 OF THE
REFORMATION-PRINCIPLES
 OF THE
 Church of *Scotland*.

With a Continuation of the same. And a Letter from
 a Member of the Associate Presbytery to a Mini-
 ster in the Presbytery of D—e.

W H E R E I N

The Exceptions that are laid against the Conduct of
 the ASSOCIATE PRESBYTERY, as also against
 their Judicial Act and Testimony, by the Rev.
 Mr. CURRIE in his Essay on Separation, are exa-
 mined; and the injurious Reflections cast upon our
 Reforming Period from 1638 to 1650, in the fore-
 said Essay, are discovered.

By WILLIAM WILSON A. M. Minister of the Gospel at Perth.

Rev. ii. 25. *But that which ye have already, hold fast till I come.*
 Jude, ver 3. *Earnestly contend for the faith which was once de-
 livered unto the saints.*

"When the greatest part of a church maketh defection from
 "the truth, the lesser part remaining sound, the greatest
 "part is the church of Separatists: Tho' the manifest and
 "greatest part in the actual exercise of discipline be the
 "church; yet, in the case of right discipline, the best, tho'
 "fewest, is the church, &c."

RUTHERFORD'S *Due Right*, &c. p. 255.

*Plausibile quidem est nomen pacis: sed maledicta est pax quæ tanta
 jactura redimitur, ut nobis pereat Christi doctrina: qua sola,
 in piam et sanctam unitatem coalescimus.*

CALVIN in *Acta Apost.* p. 200.

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P R E F A C E.

THE Testimony of the church of Scotland, since her reformation from Popery, has been stated and prosecuted for the rights and prerogatives of the kingly office of the Lord Jesus, for his sole headship and royal supremacy over the church his spiritual kingdom. And as the headship of Christ over his kingdom has been often encroached upon by the powers of this earth, so it has been expressly witnessed and wrestled for by the followers of the Lamb in this land, unto the spoiling of their goods, unto imprisonments and banishments, yea, even unto cruel tortures and resisting unto blood. In like manner, the judicatories of the kirk of Scotland, in all their several contendings in her reforming periods, have expressly witnessed for the order, government and discipline of the house of God, agreeable to the pattern shown in the mount of scripture revelation, against Prelatic tyranny, Sectarian disorder and confusion, and Erastian usurpations upon the prerogative of him who is by his Father's designation and appointment, King over Zion the hill of his holiness.

If we shall seriously consider the state of matters in the church of Scotland at present, we shall find, that, since the mild treatment which was given to a scheme of dangerous and pernicious principles, by the general assembly that met anno 1717. when Mr. Simson was dismissed from the bar of that assembly, with a general admonition, without any particular express testimony against his several pernicious principles. Laxness both in principle and practice has prevailed from time to time, error has taken deep root, it has been on the growing hand, and errors still more gross and more dangerous have been disseminate amongst us; the true Deity of the great God our Redeemer, and of the Holy Ghost our

Sanctifier and Comforter, has been impugned and denied; the idol of Self has been exalted and set up in the temple of God; And what lamentable instances have we of late of horrid blasphemies by some anonymous writers, from the press, in their profane ridicule of the several peculiar and special doctrines of revealed religion? I know not if we can find a parallel unto them in any age since the first spreading of Christianity amongst the nations.

Tho' the kingly office of the Lord Jesus our exalted Redeemer, on whose head are many crowns, has been in a special manner in former times, and may even in our day be, reckoned the word of Christ's patience given unto the church of Scotland, and for which she is called faithfully to contend; yet in these perilous times in which our lot is cast, wherein many gross and dangerous errors abound, whereby the foundations of our Christian faith are subverted, she is loudly called to enlarge her testimony, and to bear more express witness unto the true Deity of the person of Christ, and to his prophetic and priestly offices, against a generation of men, who endeavour to rob the Redeemer of his essential glory, and who profanely trample upon many important truths of revealed religion, held forth from the word of God, in our excellent Confession of Faith.

In the year 1733, the judicatories of this national church thrust out four ministers from ministerial communion with them, for no other reason but because they protested, for their own exoneration, against an act and sentence, restraining that freedom and liberty of testifying doctrinally against public sins and defections, which belongs to their office as ministers, both by the word of God, and by the acts and constitutions of this national church; whereupon the said ministers judged it their duty to associate together in a presbyterial capacity, being persuaded from the word of God, that the keys of government and discipline are given to ministers of the gospel, as well as the key of doctrine, and that the former may and ought to be exercised by ministers two or three *in collegio*, and that it is not numbers, but the truth on their side, that gives authority and weight to the acts and decisions of any church-judicatory, Mat. xvi. 19. and xviii. 18, 19, 20. And, having constitute themselves into a presbytery, they waited three years, to see if the present judicatories would discharge the duties incumbent upon them: But find-

ing,

ing, that instead of returning unto the Lord, and lifting up any faithful testimony for wounded and injured truth, the course of defection and backsliding was carried on, and particularly, that in the year 1736 error was justified at the bar of the assembly that met the said year, and dismissed without any censure at all; therefore they did emit a judicial act and testimony, condemning several steps of defection, both in present and former times, from that reformation-purity once attained unto in this national church, as also asserting the truth in opposition to several gross and dangerous errors that had been brought unto the bar of the judicatories, and which they dismissed without any due or suitable testimony against them: And four other ministers found it their duty to declare their conjunction with the foresaid ministers, after they had waited for some time in the judicatories, till they could see no probable ground to hope or expect that they would set about the reformation of corruptions, and the purging of the house of God of these scandals that had been frequently complained of, and often remonstrate against.

The reverend Mr. Currie minister at Kinglassie has thought fit to take the field against the associate presbytery, and to condemn them, and their judicial act and testimony, in a book which he entitles, *An Essay on Separation, Or, A Vindication of the Church of Scotland.*—How an essay on separation, and a vindication of the church of Scotland, are equivalent terms, as the title imports, I leave it to himself, or the recommenders of his book to explain. That which I here notice is, That thro' the whole of his book, he ranks the associate ministers amongst the most rigid separatists; he joins them with the grossest sectarians, and lays the charge of schism against them. In his preface, page 11. he tells his reader, That these brethren are doing what they can to rent, ruin, and occasion separation from the church of Scotland. This is a very grievous charge indeed: But does not our author make some acknowledgement (*Essay*, p. 59.) that the church of Scotland may be worse at this day than sometimes formerly? Does he not profess to regret the late omissions, with respect to a judicial testimony for truth, that have been justly complained of? Does he not own that there are many things both amongst ministers and people that call for bitter mourning and lamentation? page 221. tho' he is very sparing in condescending upon particulars. I have not ob-

served that he undertakes to justify expressly any of the steps of defection, whether in former or present times, that are condemned by the presbytery in their judicial act and testimony; only, he alledges as to some few of them, that they are controverted points, and therefore, according to him, not fit matter for a testimony. What now have the associate presbytery done, for which the charge of renting and ruining the church is brought against them? They have even done what our author acknowledges the judicatories of the church should have done; they have judicially condemned some steps of defection, and asserted the truths in opposition unto many particular errors of the present times, which they have in like manner particularly and expressly condemned: Are they therefore schismatics, renters and ruiners of the church? Yea, says our author, they are, and that because they testify in a way of secession. But, can a judicial testimony for truth, and against a course of defection, be obtained in a way of conjunction with the present judicatories? He cannot refuse that the judicatories decline to discharge this duty: Ought the duty therefore to be neglected by the few who are grieved with their management? Is it agreeable either to the word of God, or sound reason, to say, Because the majority of an ecclesiastic body carry on a course of defection, and, instead of doing justice to the truths of God, do manifest injury unto them, that therefore the minority, who are grieved with their proceedings, ought not judicially to witness against a course of defection, and in the same manner vindicate and assert injured truth? Or, must they be reckoned schismatics and renters of the church if they do so? The injustice of the charge that is laid against the seceding ministers, of ruining and renting the church, will further appear, if we enquire into the reasons why the present judicatories refuse to condemn such steps of defection, or to purge out such corruptions, whereby the whole lump is in danger to be leavened. Has not the wisdom of the Son of God, the glorious Head of the church, provided sufficient remedies in the church for all her internal necessities? Is not the discipline of Christ appointment a sufficient mean for the preservation and reformation of his own house? And, have not the courts of Christ's power and authority from the Lord Jesus to exercise the keys of government and discipline for the edification of his body, and the advancement of his honour and glory? What reason then

can be given, why the present judicatories refuse to discharge their duty in lifting up a judicial testimony for truth, or why they refuse to set about reformation work? There must be one of two, I cannot conceive a midst betwixt them; either they will not, or they are hindered to discharge their duty by some outward force and violence upon them. I hope the last cannot be alledged. This was indeed the case of this church betwixt 1600 and 1638. The judicatories were born down by force and violence from the court; king James VI. threatened and oppressed them; he confined, imprisoned, or banished many eminent ministers, when they were contending and wrestling for the rights and liberties of the kingdom of Christ: But it cannot be alledged, that any such violence has been offered in the least to the present judicatories, or any of their members; therefore no other reason can be given for the conduct of the judicatories, but that they are obstinate in their course and way, and will not reform. And I doubt not to assert, That when the majority of a particular visible church do in their ecclesiastical or judicative capacity go on in a course of defection from reformation purity once attained unto, and will not be reformed, after the ordinary means have been used to reclaim them, that then, and in this case, the *minor* part, tho' but very few in number, who desire to be found faithful unto the Lord, and to hold fast the purity once attained unto, may, yea, ought to depart from church-communion with the backsliding part; and that such as are office-bearers may warrantably exercise the keys of government and discipline, in a distinct capacity from the majority who are the backsliding part, for these ends and purposes for which they are given unto the church by her exalted and glorious head. It is upon this principle that my reasonings for secession from the present judicatories are built; and I hope it will be found agreeable to the word of God, and to the laudable acts and constitutions of this national church; and I look upon it to be a reformation principle, or a principle upon which the reformed churches did at first set out, and carry on the reformation-work. To the same purpose a considerable divine * expresses himself, " And when any " church is so inobservant of its own decays, as to be negligent of endeavours for a proportionable reformation,

“ if after a while any will deliver their own souls, it must
 “ be by a departure from them that hate to be reformed.”

The author of the Essay is very sparing in his scripture-pleadings, a few pages do the business in his fifth chapter; but he abounds in human authorities, his book is swelled with them, his page is every where filled with quotations from great men, upon whom he bestows liberal encomiums, such as these of *eminently holy, zealous, learned and judicious*, and sometimes all these with one breath, when he would have “ such as have separated or are tempted to separate from this
 “ church seriously to weigh their sentiments,” as page 51. I doubt not of our author’s regard to the worthy men he mentions, and I make no question but they deserve the characters he gives them; yet I do not think I transgress the bounds of charity, when I alledge, that the above high characters are given them, as much out of a sly design to impress his simple and credulous readers, as from a just and true regard to these worthy men themselves, as appears from his above words.

The author of the Essay lets the world know, that he has had a good number of books in his hand; but I must beg leave to observe, that the most part of his quotations are applied in a manner contrary to the intention and design of the worthy authors, if the connexion of the purposes which they treat, and out of which the quotations are taken, is duly considered: And therefore I humbly judge I may justly apply to our author some words of doctor Owen in his defence of the dissenters, against doctor Stillingsfleet, who seems to have managed the argument against the dissenters after the same manner, “ Neither, says he, to my knowlege, did I ever
 “ read a book wherein there was a greater appearance of diligence in the collection of things, words, sayings, expressions, discourses unto other ends, which might only
 “ cast odium on the cause opposed, or give advantage for
 “ arguings unto a seeming success, very little or no way being
 “ longing unto the cause in hand, than there is in this of our
 “ reverend author*.” I have given several particular instances, which I hope will satisfy the reader that the above observation is just: I have not pursued every quotation of our author’s, otherwise I had drawn forth this performance to a greater length; and I fear I have ground to make an apology

poloꝝ for writing ſo much upon the ſubject, it is very much contrary to my own inclination; but the great variety of matter that the Eſſay has brought upon the field, has obliged me unto it.

I muſt further obſerve, that tho' quotations from great and learned men may be of very conſiderable uſe to illuſtrate and clear an argument, yet if the argument, eſpecially when it is upon a religious ſubject, leans only to the authority of men, the ſimple and credulous may be either amused or impoſed upon; but it can never be convincing and ſatisfying to ſuch as with knowledge and judgment ſearch after the truth. Beſides, when in a diſpute, the authority of great and learned men is thrown up, we are led to enquire into the ſenſe and meaning of theſe great writers; and it is often a fruitleſs ſpending of time, to inſiſt in debates about the ſenſe and meaning of the words of great and learned men. I would have willingly avoided any thing of this nature, but our author has obliged me unto it, not only that I may do juſtice unto the great names whom I judge our author has injured, but eſpecially that I may do juſtice to the cauſe againſt which he has employed his pen. I have frequently brought ſome of our author's learned and great men againſt himſelf, and made uſe of others for clearing and illuſtrating my argument; but if any principles and concluſions that I have laid down are founded only on the authority of men, if they are not built upon the divine teſtimony, or if they are not ſupported by ſound reaſon, in an agreeableneſs to the word of God, and the acts and conſtitutions of this church founded thereon, let them be rejected, and I ſhall reckon myſelf obliged to our author or any other who ſhall diſcover them unto me.

With reſpect to our author's treatment of our reforming period, he apprehends (Pref. p. 4.) "that it may be thought ſtrange that he has given ſo many inſtances of faults, failings, or bad acts of our aſſemblies from 1638 to 1649 incluſive, which, ſays he, have been reckoned by ſome the pureſt times of preſbytery." It is very obvious, that our author is none of theſe *ſome*, who reckon theſe times the pureſt times of preſbytery; but however diminutively our author may ſpeak of them, yet the bulk and body of Preſbyterians who have known theſe times, or who are acquainted with the hiſtory of them, have always eſteemed them as times both of divine power and great purity in the church

of Scotland, excelling any after-period of this church, in many instances; till now, that the author of the Essay, a professed Presbyterian, has discovered some acts of tyranny in the administration of these times, if not exceeding, yet equal at least to, any thing that can be alledged from the conduct of the present judicatories of this national church. But he makes the following apology for what he is apprehensive may be thought strange; "I own, says he, the Lord honoured his faithful servants in that period to do much for his glory, for which I desire to give praise; and, my witness is in heaven, I have not mentioned any of these with a desire or design to blacken the church of Scotland, or such worthy ministers as lived in that period but for her vindication at this day, &c." After such a solemn appeal to heaven, I shall judge charitably of our author's intentions and designs; he to whom the appeal is made, can only penetrate into them: But then I must be allowed to say, That the tendency and design of what he writes upon this head, is to weaken all the arguments drawn from that period for the purity of our reformation. He owns that the Lord honoured his faithful servants, &c. but, does he ever mention any particular step of reformation attained unto, or maintained in the foresaid period? We have a fair and smooth general, that his faithful servants did much for his glory; but, does he ever tell us any of these things which they did for his glory? Nay, when he speaks of our reforming period, he tells us, It was reckoned by some the purest times of presbytery, and often mentions it under the name of *that extolled period*: And he gathers together thro' his book, any thing that he can invent or alledge against it; he throws up what he reckons their faults, failings, or bad acts, without mentioning their faithful and zealous proceedings in a work of reformation: Let the unprejudiced world judge, if a performance of this kind has not a direct tendency to blacken the above reforming period. But, not to insist upon this, let us examine what our author declares to be his own intention and design, in giving so many instances of faults, failings, and bad acts of former assemblies; It is, says he, "for her vindication (*viz.* of the church of Scotland) at this day, and to shew that tho' the chief ground urged by sundry for separation in our day, is our alledged dreadful, scandalous,

"dalous, unparalleled apostacy from what the church of
 "Scotland was in that period; yet the practice of judicato-
 "ries then, is what can as little be justified in sundry things,
 "as the practice of the church of Scotland in our times."
 And in his short Vindication, page 10. he tells us, that in
 the above-mentioned instances he had "nothing so much
 "in view, as the justification of the church of Scotland at
 "this day, from the charge of being such a scandalously a-
 "postate church from what she was in that period, that now
 "no communion is to be kept with her." What is here ad-
 vanced by our author, is designed to relieve his reader from
 the strange thoughts he may entertain with respect to his own
 conduct, in the instances that he gives of the bad acts of the
 former period; but, how can any reasonable man imagine,
 that giving instances of the faults, failings, or bad acts of a
 church in one period, can tend to the vindication or justifi-
 cation of the bad acts of a church in another period? Or,
 how they can tend to prove, that, notwithstanding of these
 bad acts, communion is still to be kept with her? But, if
 our author only means a comparative vindication and justifi-
 cation of the church of Scotland at this day, I have examined
 the charge he brings against the period mentioned, and I hope
 I have discovered the falshood of it in many particular in-
 stances: But was it true, that the proceedings of the judica-
 tories were then as bad as now, or that they were as tyran-
 nical in the administration in the former, as in the present
 period; yet our author's conclusion would never follow from
 his premisses, since he owns, *Pref.* p. 5. that "her conduct
 "in that period is not to be our rule, but as it agrees with
 "the divine testimony; and adds, Her failings are not to be
 "instanced as precedents for imitation, nor mentioned as the
 "least excuse for our faults in later times." He might then
 have spared all his pains, and not mentioned any of them for
 the church's vindication at this day, seeing they are so far
 from being a vindication, that, according to his own senti-
 ments, they cannot be the least excuse for our faults in later times.

I must further observe upon this head, that as the argu-
 ment is laid by our author, from the instances of failings and
 bad acts of former assemblies, in order to the vindication and
 justification of the church of Scotland at this day, he has in-
 deed managed it with abundance of cunning, but not with
 that

that candour that becomes one of his profession and character; in regard he only mentions alledged failings and bad acts of our reforming period. If he had dealt honestly with the former and present generations, he ought likewise to have compared the proceedings of the judicatories at this day, with the faithful and zealous contendings of the church of Scotland for reformation-work from the year 1638 to 1649; and, if he had stated the comparison justly upon this head, his reader might easily have seen, that the charge of defection from our reformation-purity, that is laid against the present judicatories, can very well be vindicated, notwithstanding of the instances he alledges against the assemblies during the foresaid period: His reader might likewise have seen the vast difference that there is betwixt the general and habitual course of the proceedings of the assemblies during our reforming period, and the procedure of assemblies in the present times of lamentable degeneracy and defection; namely, That the former were towards reformation, and that the latter have a manifest tendency towards deformation; and consequently, that all our author's alledged instances of faults, failings, and bad acts of assemblies in the former period of this church, when duly examined, make nothing at all to his purpose. Upon the whole, notwithstanding of the above apology, the author makes for himself, I cannot conceive that he has gained any thing by the many instances he alledges of bad acts of former assemblies wherewith he swells his book, and which he repeats I know not how often, but the hardning of the present generation in their iniquity, when it is represented unto them thro' the whole of the Essay, that their sins were equalled, if not exceeded, in a period which has been reckoned the purest times of this church; as also the exposing of the church of Scotland to the ridicule of our common adversaries, who have always stretched their wicked inventions to defame our reforming period, and who may now make their boast of it, that a professed son of the church of Scotland does in several instances symbolize with them in the contempt they have poured upon the famous assembly 1638, and other assemblies of that period.

Our author, Pref. page 11. makes another solemn appeal in the following terms, " Though here I can appeal to the
 " Searcher of hearts, I have said nothing with a design to
 " displease any, and said nothing but what I conceived to be
 " truth

" truth and matter of fact; yet, as I have not written with
 " a design to please any party, so I lay my account with cen-
 " sure from persons of very different sentiments, &c." Tho'
 I have given several particular instances of things advanced by
 our author, that are neither truth nor matter of fact, yet I
 shall charitably judge, that he conceives what he has writ to
 be truth and matter of fact: Only, I wish he had been more
 tender in making such solemn appeals and attestations, which
 appear to me to be equivalent to a solemn oath; or I wish
 that at least he had better advised what he has written, be-
 fore he had ushered in his Essay to the world with such weigh-
 ty and awful attestations. He insinuates in his preface, that
 it had been two years at least upon his hands; and I conceive
 the church of Scotland would have been at no loss, neither
 would truth have sustained any prejudice, tho' it had lain till
 this day in his closet, amongst his other papers, which ac-
 cording to his advertisement he was once resolved to publish.
 But, whatever his or my conceptions may be, I doubt if he
 will persuade every one who reads his Essay, and who knows
 the history of this church, to believe that he himself is well
 assured that every thing is truth and matter of fact which he
 reports in his Essay. It is a considerable loss unto this church,
 that we want a full and just history of the above-mentioned
 period; we have nothing but some scattered shreds and frag-
 ments of the history of these times: However, I have endea-
 voured, from the best historical vouchers that I could find,
 to give some short account of the rise and progress of refor-
 mation-work in the year 1638; this, with the other histori-
 cal accounts that I have given, for vindicating that despised
 period from the contempt that many cast upon it, and for
 discovering the falshood of several matters of fact alledged in
 the Essay, has very much swelled this book: Yet I hope it
 will not be disagreeable to the lovers of Scotland's covenanted
 reformation, and may be useful for the information of such
 as are willing to receive it; the most part of the present ge-
 neration being very much unacquainted with the remarkable
 appearances of the Lord for this church in former times, and
 with the faithful proceedings and contendings of our reform-
 ing fathers, for maintaining and carrying on a work of re-
 formation in this land.

As I have no pleasure in controversial writings, so I had
 no inclination to attempt an examination of the reverend Mr.

C—'s

C——'s Essay on separation, considering the difficulties that attend an undertaking of this kind, especially at this juncture, not only from the critical humour of the age, but also from the different views, and divided sentiments, that are to be found even among such who fear the Lord, in this day of perplexity in our valley of vision; being also conscious to myself of my own insufficiency for managing a work of this nature; yet I was led by the hand of providence to it in the following manner. Upon the first reading of the reverend Mr. C——'s Essay, published a little before the down-sitting of the last assembly, anno 1738, it appeared plain to me, that as he had mistaken the state of the question betwixt the seceding ministers and the present judicatories, so he had set their whole case in a very odious light, both to the prejudice of truth, and of that cause which the seceding ministers espouse, and which I hope and am persuaded is no other but what is espoused by the church of Scotland in her laudable acts and constitutions, agreeable to the word of God, our Confession of Faith, Form of Church government, Books of Discipline, and Directory for Worship, and which we are bound and obliged to espouse and cleave unto, by the national covenant of Scotland, and the solemn league and covenant of the three nations. This engaged me to publish a letter I had writ a reverend brother on the subject of secession from the present judicatories, to which I subjoined a postscript, containing some remarks upon the Essay on separation; this I did with a design to clear the true state of the present question, and to prevent the impressions that might be made, to the prejudice of truth, upon the minds of inadvertent readers, by a book filled with the names of great men, and at the same time highly applauded, and strongly recommended by men of different principles; and, I doubt not to say, from different motives and ends. Whether the Essay was recommended so warmly by some considerable men, both ministers and others, from any conviction they had of the justness and strength of the author's reasonings; or rather, if they did not recommend it, because they judged it a book calculate to make some impression upon the minds of people, from the author's fair and smooth language, and the large profession he has made of zeal for the rights of the Christian people, and his numerous quotations from divines which are justly esteemed; whether I say, their recommendations did chiefly proceed from one or other

other of these springs, is a question I leave with themselves, and shall not determine: Only I must own, that, if this Essay had not been so much applauded and recommended, I should never have judged it worth my while to have enquired further unto it. And, when I came to read it over again with some more close attention, I soon perceived that the few remarks I had made in the above postscript, tho' I judged them just, yet were very defective; and therefore I digested my further thoughts upon it, into the order and method in which they are now publish'd. And as I judged the publishing of them was a debt that I owed to the truth, so I thought it likewise my duty to give a reason of the hope that is in me upon such a public and confident challenge as the author of the Essay has given: As also, I judged it incumbent upon me, to contribute my endeavours to remove the mistakes that many are under, and the prejudices that others are filled with, against a cause that is industriously misrepresented by some, and out of mere ignorance spoke against by others. If the author of the Essay thinks fit to enter into the question and argument as I have endeavoured to clear and state them, I shall, if the Lord give time and health, attend him; but if he diverts from the true state of the question, amusing the simple with misapplied quotations from eminent and learned divines, or with reporting private stories and hearsays, I reckon I have more important work on my hands than to take any manner of notice of him.

The author of the Essay, in his title page, mentions only the seceding brethren as his parties; and in his preface, p. 10. he tells us, That, "when he entred upon the subject of separation, he had not a thought of mentioning the said brethren as writing against their conduct, but that upon second thoughts he judged it needful to consider their testimony, &c." Accordingly, a great part of his Essay is laid against a book called *Plain Reasons*, &c. a book in which the seceding brethren have no manner of concern. As I have not read it for several years by-past, so I am not to take any manner of notice of what our author advances about it; whether or not he has done justice to the author or authors of the said book, I leave it to themselves to enquire into: In the mean time, since it is only upon second thoughts (as he tells us) that he brought in his seceding brethren, and since the *Plain Reasons* have so much room in his Essay,

He

he might have given that book a place likewise in his title page; but he has thought fit to do otherwise, for reasons best known to himself, leaving it to the world to make what conjectures they please.

When I have considered the lax principles concerning church-communion that run thro' the Essay on Separation, and that the evident tendency of that whole performance is not only to defame a reforming period of this church, but also to cast loose our reformation principles; I have ventured to send this book abroad, under the title of, *A Defence of the Reformation-principles of the Church of Scotland*; being likewise persuaded that there is nothing maintained or asserted in the Judicial Act and Testimony of the associate presbytery, but the very same principles: But, if any shall take exception at the title, I wish that, before they censure and condemn it, they would give themselves the trouble to read over the book; and if any other but our reformation principles agreeable to the word of God are asserted, I shall (as I have said) reckon myself obliged unto them who point them out unto me: And, if any alledge that I have failed in the defence of the said principles, I readily acknowledge I have failed very much this way, but I have endeavoured to do what I could; and it is with some difficulty that I have got some few hours spared now and then, for a work of this kind, from the other necessary duties of my ministerial office and calling.

I conclude this preface with transcribing a few words which Mr. Knox in his history reports, were uttered by Mr. Wishart, who was an eminent instrument in the hand of the Lord in bringing the church of Scotland out of Rome Antichristian, and who sealed the testimony of Jesus with his blood, against the abominations of Rome. A little before his violent death, he expressed himself in the following manner, " This realm shall be illuminated with the light of Christ's
 " gospel, as clearly as ever any realm since the days of the apostles;
 " tles; the house of God shall be builded in it; yea, it
 " shall not lack (whatsoever the enemy imagine in the
 " contrary) the very cope-stone: Neither (said he) shall
 " this be long to; there shall not many suffer after me, till
 " that the glory of the Lord shall evidently appear, and
 " shall once triumph in despite of Satan: But, alas! if the
 " people shall be after unthankful, then fearful and terrible
 " shall

" Shall the plagues be that shall follow." The above words of one who had a more than ordinary measure of the Spirit of God, and who was a seer in his day, deserve to be noticed; especially because they are agreeable unto the testimony of God in the holy scriptures, and also because they may give us some view of the state of the church of Scotland, both in her reforming and declining periods. When I consider the words of the Spirit of God by the prophet, Isa. lv. 5. *Behold, thou shalt call a nation that thou knowest not, and nations that knew not thee shall run unto thee, &c.* Isa. xlii. 4. *And the isles shall wait for his law; and Psal. ii. 8. Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession;* I doubt not to say, that in Scotland, in reforming and covenanting Scotland, the above and the like prophecies had in part a signal and glorious accomplishment, and that the event answered what the above eminent instrument in our reformation had foreseen and expressed: And if we consider our unthankfulness unto God for his signal appearances for us, manifested in the degeneracy of all ranks of persons in Scotland from the Lord, the whole word of God gives us ground to apprehend fearful and terrible judgments upon us. Yea, what fearful judgments are we under at present? A perverse spirit is at this day mingled amongst us, a spirit of error and delusion prevails, the anger of the Lord has divided us, and the good Spirit of God is very much departed from our assemblies for worship and discipline, and the spirit of deep sleep and slumber is poured out upon us; these and the like spiritual strokes may be the forerunners of some terrible appearance of God in a way of righteous and holy judgment against us.

When I have mentioned the evident restraint of the Spirit, I cannot but take notice of a reflection made by the author of the Essay, p. 25. where, after some words transcribed from a print called a seasonable testimony, our author, as appears to me, with a sneer at the seceding brethren, subjoins, " Nor (says he) have we heard of any extraordinary pouring out of the Spirit attending the ministry of our brethren more than others; few pricked at the heart, crying out, Men and brethren, what shall we do to be saved?" The above reflection is very indecent in one of our author's character and profession: But I shall only observe upon it, that I hope every one of the seceding brethren will readily acknowledge

lege that they are not free of the guilt and sin of our day
 whereby the Spirit of the Lord is grieved and provoked to
 depart; and that therefore they ought to be humbled before
 the Lord as much as others. And tho' they do not alledge
 that there is any extraordinary pouring out of the Spirit at-
 tending their ministry more than others, yet if the Lord is
 pleased at any time to countenance his work amongst their
 hands, either in the conviction or edification of any, whether
 upon the days of solemn humiliation that they observe thro'
 the land, or upon other occasions, the least measure, I say,
 of such countenance from the Lord, ought to be humbly ac-
 knowleged, especially in a day of great provocation; and
 there should be a waiting upon the Lord, *who hideth his face
 from the house of Jacob.* And tho' the seceding brethren may
 be upbraided with the above insulting reflections, yet as the
 communications of the holy Spirit are not the rule of our du-
 ty, but the law and the testimony; so it may be alleviating
 unto them, that the case is not altogether singular, I mean
 with respect to the above reflection. An eminent witness in
 his day cries out, Psal. xlii. 10. *As with a sword in my bones,
 mine enemies reproach me: While they say daily unto me, Where
 is thy God?* And the church in like manner, Psal. cxv. 2.
 But as every one of us have a deep hand in the provocation,
 and as the Lord is holy and righteous in pleading his contro-
 versy with us; may that blessed time come, when the Lord's
 professing people in Scotland shall thro' the influence of his
 Spirit and grace, by the means of his word, be made to say,
*Come and let us return unto the Lord: for he hath torn, and
 he will heal us; he hath smitten, and he will bind us up,* Hol.
 vi. 1. May the Lord hasten it.

WILLIAM WILSON.



A
D E F E N C E
O F T H E
R E F O R M A T I O N - P R I N C I P L E S
O F T H E
Church of Scotland, &c.



I N T R O D U C T I O N.

Containing a short Narrative of some Contendings in a way of Church-communion, for some Years immediately before the Secession from the present Judicatories was stated.

THAT it is duty to testify against the defections and backslidings of a particular visible church from that reformation purity she has once attained unto, is what cannot well be refused; but, with respect to the manner of testifying against such defections and backslidings, this is so much disputed, under so many specious pretexts, and from such different principles and motives, that, in effect, any kind of public testimony against the corruptions of a backsliding church is condemned, as having a tendency towards division, schism and unwarrantable separation. There are only two ways alledged
B whereby

whereby a testimony can be maintained against such corruptions as may prevail in a church; the one is, by secession from that part of the ecclesiastic body who are carrying on a course of defection, and who obstinately continue in the same, refusing to be reclaimed; the other is, by continuing in communion and conjunction with them, and at the same time testifying against their corruptions and defections. With respect to the first of these, when a testimony is maintained in a way of secession, these from whom the secession is made, having numbers for ordinary on their side, exclaim against such as withdraw from communion with them, as dangerous schismatics: Thus the church of Rome accuse all the Protestant churches as guilty of a dangerous schism; and likewise the church of England charge the whole body of dissenters with breach of ecclesiastic unity, and with unwarrantable separation from them; in like manner the present judicatories of this national church, in an act of their last assembly, condemn the conduct of the brethren of the associate presbytery, as a dangerous schism. The reverend author of the essay on separation endeavours to prove the justice of the charge; but how he has succeeded in his attempt, is afterwards enquired into. And as for the other way of bearing testimony against the corruptions of a particular church, namely, by continuing in communion with such who are carrying on a course of defection, and at the same time testifying against the same; the foresaid author makes some acknowledgment, that the church of Scotland is worse at this day than sometime formerly, and that she hath been upon the decline for some time, *Essay*, p. 59. but he pleads that we ought to contend in a way of communion with the present judicatories: Therefore I judge it may give some light to the question before us, if we observe, that, when a testimony is given against the backslidings of a church in a way of communion with the backsliding party, it must be done in one of the three following ways; either doctrinally from the pulpit, or by protestations and dissents in judicatories, or by petitions and representations unto them, by such ministers or other church-members as are grieved with their proceedings. But the present judicatories of this national church have judicially condemned all these several ways of testifying against their procedure; whereby they have upon the matter demanded from ministers, and other church-members, a silent

submission to all their determinations: The truth of this will appear from the following short narrative, that I offer, of some contentings in a way of communion with the judicatories immediately before the secession was stated: And, as I go along, I shall also take notice of some considerable failings in pleading the cause of truth, while the testimony was managed only after this manner; and these had their rise and spring in a very great measure from a prevailing disposition and inclination to maintain what was reckoned peace and ecclesiastical unity.

When the intrusion of ministers upon dissenting and reclaiming congregations in consequence of the Patronage-act became frequent, several presbyteries dealt with assemblies, by instructions given unto their commissioners, that a stop might be put to violent intrusions, and that proper measures might be taken to prevent the settlement of ministers in congregations without their call and consent: But no regard was had to these instructions; they were read once or twice in a committee appointed by the several assemblies for receiving them, and there they were buried. The violent settlement of ministers was at length countenanced and supported by the authority of the general assemblies of this church; therefore some ministers began to think it needful to testify in a more open and plain manner against the violence done to christian congregations by the intruding of ministers upon them: Hence in the year 1730, when the case of the parish of Hutton, complaining of a sentence of the commission appointing a violent settlement in that parish, came before the assembly that met that year, they not only refused to reverse the sentence of the commission, but likewise appointed the presbytery of Chirnside to proceed to the said settlement. Several members of that assembly dissented from the said sentence, and craved that their dissent might be recorded; but this was refused by a vote of the assembly, and their clerk was discharged to mark any dissent in that matter. I have just now before me the original subscriptions of several ministers and elders to the fore said dissent; some of the worthy ministers are now in the Lord: They were once resolved to have published their dissent, together with the names of all such as should sign their adherence to the same, that there might be some publick standing testimony against the injury that was done to the flock and heritage of God by the fore said sentence of

assembly, and also as a mean to put some stop to such violent proceedings for the time to come; but this design was laid aside; the arguments for maintaining peace and unity did prevail, as frequently they do in a declining state of the church, to the very great prejudice of a suitable and seasonable Testimony for the truth.

Tho' the intrusion of ministers upon christian congregations, especially when they are authorised and countenanced by the supreme judicatories of this national church, must be reckoned a very considerable step of defection from our reformation-principles; yet an affair of much greater consequence came upon the field, when in the year 1726 we were alarmed with a flagrant report, that the Arian Heresy had entered into our borders, and that it was taught in one of our principal seminaries of learning, the university of Glasgow, by Mr. Simpson professor of divinity there: It was likewise reported, that the said Mr. Simpson continued to teach the same dangerous errors for which he had been formerly under process, and which the assembly Anno 1717 had discharged him to vent and teach; tho' in the act of the said assembly the prohibition is laid in very general terms, and none of his dangerous propositions, which were owned and maintained by himself in his answers to the libel exhibited against him, are either particularly condescended upon, or expressly condemned. The presbytery of Glasgow, having enquired into the truth of the above reports, found ground for a process against him; and the prosecution was carried on with the assistance of a committee appointed by the assembly that met Anno 1726, as also with the assistance of a committee named for the same effect by the assembly Anno 1727. When this affair had been before several assemblies of this church, it was found proven, both by the depositions of witnesses who heard him, as also by his own papers and writings contained in the process, that he had vented and taught *such propositions* whereby the great God our Saviour is robbed of his true Deity; as also it was found proven that he had asserted, 'That the three persons of the adorable Trinity were not one substance in number.' Likewise the committee appointed by the assembly 1727 found it proven, that he had continued to teach the same dangerous errors for which he was formerly prosecuted, and whereby many of the important truths held forth from the word of God, in our Confession of Faith, were

subverted. And when this important affair was referred by the assembly 1728 unto the several presbyteries of this national church, that they might give their judgment upon it, tho' a great part of presbyteries gave it as their opinion that Mr. Simson should be deposed, yet the assembly 1729, who concluded the process, inflicted no higher censure upon him than that of Suspension from teaching and preaching, and all exercise of any ecclesiastical power or function, until another general assembly should think fit to take off this sentence. The late reverend Mr. Boston minister at Etterick read a protestation against the foresaid conclusion given unto this weighty affair; but, at the earnest desire of the moderator, he took the same under his consideration till the meeting of assembly next day, and then he did not insist upon it. Several ministers having entered into a resolution, that instructions should be brought up from the several presbyteries to the next assembly for an act assertory of the truths of God, to be conceived in such a manner, as to obviate and condemn the gross errors taught by Mr. Simson, in the terms and expressions in which he had vented them; this was proposed as the best expedient for maintaining truth, together with our ecclesiastical peace and unity; and, upon this motion and resolution, Mr. Boston was dealt with to drop his protestation: But it is to be regretted, that the proper season of a testimony against the injury that was done to truth, by passing Mr. Simson in such a superficial and slight manner, was lost. By the foresaid sentence of assembly he is continued in Ministerial and Christian communion, tho' it was found proven that he had blasphemed that name which is above every name that is named: And tho' he could easily have satisfied the presbytery of Glasgow, if he had been found in the faith, before the commencement of the process against him; yet, in his very first letter unto them, he justifies his leading fallacy, whereby he confounds the essential perfections of God, with the personal properties of the three adorable persons of the Godhead: And also he continued, by manifold tergiversations and shiftings from year to year, to refuse to give satisfaction to the judicatories, always justifying his doctrine as agreeable to the word of God, and our Confession of Faith, till he saw that censure was inevitable; and then he made some general acknowledgment, but yet he never acknowledged that he had taught any thing contrary to the word of God or to our Con-

Confession of Faith. As the foresaid season of a testimony for the honour of the Redeemer, and against the indignity done him, was lost; so some of the ministers, who, for the above mentioned reason, advised Mr Boston to drop his protestation, were soon very sensible of their mistake. The associate presbytery, in their judicial act and testimony, do justly reckon the conclusion given by the assembly 1729 to the important affair before them, to be one of the grounds of the Lord's controversy against us; and we have every one reason to be humbled before the Lord, because a suitable testimony was not given in its proper season against the above-mentioned act and sentence, whereby Mr. Simson was dismissed, not only with such a slight censure for his errors in the doctrine of the blessed Trinity, notwithstanding of the above aggravations of his crime in shifting to give due satisfaction, but also without the least censure for the many other gross and dangerous errors he had taught; neither was there any kind of testimony given by the said assembly against them.

Several presbyteries did, in consequence of the above motions and resolutions among some ministers at the former assembly, instruct their commissioners to insist before the assembly 1730 for a warning against Mr. Simson's, and other errors of the times, striking against the fundamentals of our holy religion: These instructions were moved in open house, and it was agreed that the committees of instructions and overtures should have them under their consideration, and that then the assembly should consider the matter; but, after all, no particular warning against error could be obtained, nor any act assertory of the truths, in opposition to the terms in which they had been impugned by Mr. Simson. All that was done by that assembly is contained in their eighth printed act, wherein they recommend it to all ministers of this church, "to be careful to warn and guard their people against the spreading of any errors contrary to the scriptures and our Confession of Faith, and such as are condemned by former general assemblies of this church, particularly such as strike against the fundamentals of our holy religion." In the above recommendation, ministers are directed to warn people against errors condemned by the Confession of Faith, &c. but the assembly make no particular mention of these errors; they leave every one to judge what were errors of that sort, and what not; and this could nowise answer the end of the above instructions

instructions for a particular warning against error; neither could it be of use to support the truths which were opposed and subverted by Mr. Simson, seeing he always maintained that the propositions vented by him were not contrary to our Confession of Faith, but agreeable thereto: Therefore a motion was made at this meeting of assembly, that, for the sake of truth, they would assert, in express terms, the necessary existence of our Lord Jesus Christ; but this was refused, upon a pretence that the above general recommendation, to warn people against errors condemned by the Confession of Faith, was sufficient: Upon which a protestation was taken by a reverend brother, now one of the seceding ministers; but through perswasion it was not duly insisted upon. Before I pass the proceedings of the assembly 1730, it deserves to be remembered, that tho' the conclusion given to Mr. Simson's affair was contrary to the declared minds of a great number of presbyteries, yet there was not a remonstrance offered at the assembly 1730, by any of the presbyteries of Scotland, against the above conclusion of the assembly 1729; yea, it was from a very small number of presbyteries that the above instructions, about a seasonable warning against error, were sent. As this was a lamentable evidence of a silent submission unto the decision of the national assembly in Mr. Simson's affair, so it might be justly constructed that the most part of presbyteries had not only let go any testimony they had given, for a higher censure to be inflicted upon Mr. Simson, but also that a suitable and due concern for truth, lying wounded and bleeding in our streets, was at a very low ebb amongst us.

A little after the meeting of the assembly 1730, a paper was published, intituled, An enquiry into Mr. Simson's sentiments about the Trinity, from his papers in process. The very reverend and learned author, who is well known in the church of Scotland, makes it evident from Mr. Simson's own papers, that it is his opinion, That the three persons of the Trinity, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, are not one substance in number, but three distinct substances; as also, that it is his opinion, that the Father alone is the self-existent, necessarily-existent, and independent being; and consequently, that the divine attributes and titles, such as the supreme God, the only true God, in their strict and proper sense, belong to the Father alone, and are not to be ap-

plied unto the Son and Holy Spirit. The above enquiry is directed to all the presbyteries of the church of Scotland: It was thought that the pathetick and strong reasoning that it contains, would have had weight with them to have exerted themselves with more vigour for the cause of truth, against the meeting of another assembly; especially when it was found, that the method of dealing by instructions had not the desired effect. Accordingly the synod of Perth and Stirling, at their meeting April 1731, drew up a petition concerning errors in doctrine, and intrusions into vacant congregations; and appointed their brethren, members of the ensuing assembly, and others joined with them in commission, to present the same, and to insist upon it before the assembly. This petition was presented and read in the assembly that met May 1731; and the members from the synod of Angus, and presbyteries of St. Andrews, Dunfermline, Aberdeen, Kincardine, Ellon, and Aberlour, likewise represented, that they had instructions from their respective constituents to make the like representations to the assembly, craving a warning against errors in doctrine, the growth of infidelity, &c. But all the above representations and petitions were referred by that assembly to their commission, with power to them to do concerning the matters contained in them as they should see cause, excepting what related to the method of calling ministers to vacant parishes: And the commission having delayed the affair from one meeting to another, till the 9th day of March 1732, upon which day (as the extract of their sentence before me bears) the address of the synod of Perth was read, also instructions from the presbytery of St. Andrews to their commissioners to the late assembly; such of the commissioners from the synod of Perth who were present, were heard. After some reasoning, the commission agreed, that a letter should be writ to all the presbyteries, earnestly recommending in the terms of the above-mentioned act of the assembly 1730. This was all that was done by the commission: Whereupon the reverend Mr. Alexander Moncrieff did in his own name, and in name of his constituents, protest against the above sentence, as too general, and not answering the ends proposed by them.

When the above Methods of presbyterial and synodical instructions and representations were tried without any success, a representation and petition to the general assembly, that

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met at Edinburgh *anno* 1732, was signed by above forty ministers, and some ruling elders, containing a particular representation of grievances, such as the growth and spreading of error, intrusions into the ministry, and the procedure of the commissions of the general assemblies, assuming to themselves a power of appointing committees for trying and ordaining ministers in vacant congregations, not only without the concurrence and consent of the presbyteries and synods immediately concerned, but also in direct opposition to their declared minds; craving likewise, that the assembly might take proper measures for the redress of the above and other grievances particularly mentioned. The foresaid representation and petition was given in, according to the usual order, to the committee of bills, to be by them transmitted to the assembly; but after long attendance upon them, till near the close of the assembly, they refused to transmit the same. This obliged such of the ministers as had a commission from their brethren to present the said representation and petition, and to insist upon the same, to go to the bar of the assembly with a complaint against their committee, and to crave that the assembly themselves might do them the justice, to give their representation and petition a reading in their presence; but this was stily refused: Whereupon the reverend Mr. George Gillespie gave in a protestation, signed by himself and fourteen other ministers, being all the petitioners that were then present at Edinburgh. In this protestation against the deed of the assembly refusing to read their representation, they express themselves in the following manner, " We find ourselves obliged much against our inclination, and with all due deference to this venerable assembly, humbly to protest in our own name, and in name of all concurring in the said representation, or adhering, against the said deed; and for preservation of the just rights belonging to us as men, Christians, and office-bearers in this church (by the light of nature, word of God, constitution of this church, claim of right, laws of the land, and manifold approved precedents since the reformation to this day) to have representations and petitions anent grievances, which are, or may be offered by ourselves or others to the general assembly, or other judicatories of this church, received, openly read, and taken into serious consideration by the said courts for redress, &c." But neither was this protestation,

on, tho' given in under form of instrument, regarded, or allowed to be marked. The representation and petition, together with their protestation, were immediately published, and are extant in print.

From the above words of the protestation, it is evident, that the protesting ministers reckoned themselves denied a just right belonging to them as men, Christians, &c. by the light of nature, &c. Yet the reverend Mr. Currie, who signed this protestation, has not in all his Essay found the present judicatories guilty of one single act of tyranny in the administration. It is proper likewise here to observe, that at the same time (and, I can well affirm, without any concert with the ministers, and therefore by a special direction of divine providence) a representation and petition was given into the same assembly, signed by above fifteen hundred people, members of this church, many of them bearing the office of elders, tho' they do not delign themselves such, as appears from their subscriptions to their paper now printed; but their representation and petition could not get the credit of a transmit to the assembly: Therefore their commissioners came to the bar of the assembly, and craved that their petition might get a reading in their presence; but this was positively refused; whereupon they likewise protested against the refusal. It was justly reckoned an instance of tyranny in the two reigns preceeding the revolution, that the subjects were discharged to petition for the redress of grievances; and therefore this their just privilege was restored them by our valuable *Claim of Right*. Tho' our assemblies have not under ecclesiastical pains prohibited the members of this church to petition them, yet the contempt with which so many ministers and members of the church were treat, when they came in a regular and orderly manner to the bar of the assembly, falls little short of the tyranny of the above-mentioned reigns; and it is a manifest evidence that the assembly 1732 did condemn this way of testifying by humble representations and petitions against the course of backsliding and defection, that the judicatories were carrying on with a very high hand: We shall scarce find a parallel to it in any well governed civil society, and was very unbecoming any ecclesiastical judicatory, who have only a ministerial power and authority given them by the Head of the church for the edification of his body, and who ought to exercise that power and authority for the redress of such grievances

vances as any member of the body brings before them. That the above arbitrary step might have been justly reckoned a ground of secession from such judicatories, who had so little regard unto, yea, who poured so much contempt and scorn upon such a considerable number of the members of the ecclesiastical body, when they came before them with their mournful complaints; yet, notwithstanding of this, we continued still to contend in a way of communion and conjunction with them.

When testimonies by representations and petitions were so little regarded, several ministers judged it their duty to testify more plainly from the pulpit against the course that the judicatories were taking: Accordingly the reverend Mr. Ebenezer Erskine did at the opening of the synod of Perth and Stirling, October 1732, testify doctrinally against the act of assembly past that year anent the method of calling ministers, as also against the proceedings of church-judicatories in imposing ministers upon dissenting and reclaiming congregations; but that synod condemned his doctrine, and appointed him to be rebuked at their bar, for the faithful freedom he used: Upon which he appealed from them to the general assembly that met at Edinburgh 1733; and that assembly affirmed the sentence of the Synod, and appointed him to be rebuked at their bar for impugning, in his sermon before the synod, acts of assembly, and proceedings of church-judicatories. Now, the door is shut against doctrinal testimonies, and the mouths of ministers are stopt: If they testify from the pulpit against the proceedings of judicatories however arbitrary they may be, or against acts of assemblies however opposite to our reformation-principles and purity, they must lay their account with church censure. When Mr. Erskine and three other ministers perceived this, they judged it their duty to protest, for their own just and necessary exhortation, against the fore-said act and sentence: But this way of testifying is immediately condemned in a most severe and arbitrary manner; the assembly appoint their commission to suspend the four protesting ministers, in case they do not retract their protestation, and declare their sorrow for the same; and, in case the fore-said ministers act contrary to the sentence of suspension, the commission is appointed to proceed to a higher censure against them.

Notwithstanding of the above unjust sentence, the four protesting ministers continued to testify in a way of communion
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with the judicatories: Therefore, at the meeting of commission in August foresaid year, they gave in two several representations; one of them was read, but the other was refused a reading: The representations are in print, and speak for themselves. Only, I must notice, that, in both their representations, they not only give the reasons why they could not retract their protestation, but also they judged it their duty to enlarge their testimony in several particular instances; and, amongst others, they make mention of the gross errors that had been vented and taught by Mr. Simson, and of the conduct of judicatories in dismissing him from their bar without a suitable testimony against his errors. Thus they do not confine their testimony to violent settlements, but upon the matter take in what had been contained in instructions, representations and petitions laid before former assemblies: But, at the foresaid meeting of commission, the sentence of suspension past by the assembly was execute against them; and, in November thereafter, they were thrust out from communion with the judicatories, with their above testimony in their hands: Whereupon they gave in a protestation, declaring a *secession* from the party who were carrying on a course of defection from our reformed and covenanted principles; as the said protestation more fully bears. From what is above narrated, the reader may see, that there has been a series and tract of testifying in a way of communion and conjunction with the judicatories, before a secession from them was declared; as also he may see, that the ordinary means of testifying in a way of church communion stand judicially condemned by the present judicatories: As for instance, when many ministers, and many other church-members, came to the bar of the assembly with representations and petitions, these are despised and quite disregarded; and therefore this way of testifying stands materially condemned. When a doctrinal testimony is emitted against a course of defection, this is expressly condemned by the assembly 1733; and, when a protestation for exoneration is entred against the said condemnatory sentence, this is also severely censured by the foresaid assembly. And tho' it may be justly affirmed, that any of the members of the ecclesiastic body have a just claim to protest against any determination and decision of the supreme judicatory, which are opposite unto, or a deviation from our reformation-principles and purity; yet this privilege has been denied

denied even the members of that court; they have been always refused the liberty of having their dissents recorded, except in two cases, *anno* 1737. And it does not appear to be the judgment of that assembly, that dissents with the reasons of them should be recorded; in regard they instructed their commission to prepare the draught of an overture against next assembly, to be transmitted to presbyteries, to know their opinion whether dissents, with the reasons of them, should be insert in the registers of assembly, or not; and accordingly, tho' two dissents with their reasons were marked *anno* 1737, yet the assembly 1738 refused that privilege. From what is above observed, it is evident, that the present judicatories were bent upon their backsliding course, before any secession was declared from them; and that they not only condemned and despised all the ordinary means of testifying in a way of communion with them, but that they came the length of thrusting out some ministers from their communion, for no other reason but because they judged it their duty to bear testimony against their course and way. And tho' the judicatories are not to this day reforming, nor returning to the Lord; yet the cry is now, as it was then, for union and conjunction with them; and against secession from them, as an unwarrantable separation, and an unaccountable schism. I must here also observe from the fore said narrative, that tho' there was no secession stated, till, by the over ruling and adorable providence of God, some ministers were thrust out by the judicatories themselves; yet I humbly judge there was too much ground given for secession before that event: As for instance, when the assembly 1729 kept in ministerial and Christian communion with them, one who had derogate from the essential glory of the Son of God, and who had continued to vent and teach several other gross and dangerous errors; especially when the two following assemblies, tho' dealt with for that end, refused an act assertory of the truths, in opposition unto the terms in which they had been opposed, or a reasonable warning against the errors of the times: As also I judge, that the grounds of secession were yet more enlarged, when the assembly 1732 refused to give a hearing to so many church-members, who represented their grievances to them, and petitioned for redress; and yet more, when the assembly 1733 condemned a doctrinal testimony for truth, and sentenced some ministers to censure for protesting for their just rights

rights and privileges. After all, when the secession was not declared, till some ministers were thrust out from their communion merely for contending against a course of defection; it is a manifest evidence, that they have not been precipitate nor rash in their secession; they have not *gone out with haste*, neither have they *gone out by flight*. They were brought at first into their present situation by the adorable providence of God; and this is the question that is now before us, Whether or not it is their duty to contend for truth, and against present and former defections, in a way of secession from the present judicatories of this national church? Or, which is the same thing, Whether or not it is their duty to continue to testify against a course of defection, in the present situation into which they have been brought by the holy and wise providence of God? and consequently, Whether or not it is the duty of such other brethren in the ministry, and of professors thro' the land, who desire to cleave to Scotland's covenanted reformation, to join hands with them in the foresaid testimony and manner of testifying? This leads me to observe in the last place, That, when the secession was stated at first, the protesting ministers declared their readiness to hold communion with all and every one "who were adhering to the principles
 " of the true Presbyterian covenanted church of Scotland,
 " in her doctrine, worship, government and discipline," and,
 " who were groaning under the evils, and affected with the
 " grievances complained of, and in their several spheres were
 " wrestling against the same." But it is matter of regret, that so many who have sometime appeared against a course of defection, and amongst others the author of the Essay, are involving themselves in the sins of the judicatories, either by justifying or extenuating their defections, or by their continuing in conjunction with them, tho' they are still going on in a course of backsliding, and refuse to be reclaimed; whereby the door of communion with them is more and more shut. But I proceed to consider more particularly the state of the question, and the reasons and grounds of our present secession, which I hope will be found to be warranted by the word of God, and the acts and constitutions of the church of Scotland agreeable thereto.

*Wherein the true State of the Question concerning Se-
cession from the present Judicatories is enquired
into.*

AS unwarrantable separation from any particular church is both sinful and dangerous; so conjunction with a backsliding and corrupt church, either in her backslidings and corruptions, or to the prejudice of truth, and of a suitable testimony against such corruptions and backslidings, dishonouring to God, hurtful to mens souls, and the greatest injury that can be done to our posterity. The reverend author of the Essay against separation thinks fit to begin his performance with a citation from Mr. Shiells in his account of the life of Mr. Renwick, *It is minister's duty to shew people how great a sin schism is**. Here our author stops; but I hope it will not be impertinent to transcribe what Mr. Shiells subjoins to the above words, "And in this endeavour to clear and
" condemn true schism, and to press true union, Mr. Ren-
" wick was not wanting; but he thought it also necessary to
" teach people, not to call every thing schism which the
" world calls by that name, otherwise he would have con-
" demned all the most innocent withdrawals from the cor-
" ruptions and defections of men that ever were in the world,
" even such separations which the mouth of the Lord hath
" commanded from unequally yoked fellowships; and thought
" it likewise needful to shew, that standing still in an adhe-
" rence to the reformation, and refusing to concur with the
" backsliding part of a church, tho' the greatest part, when
" union and communion with them cannot be kept up with-
" out sin, or without being induced or seduced, from for-
" merly attained integrity, when the separation is in that
" which a national church hath commanded all her members
" to disown, by her standing acts and authority, is not schism
" nor sinful separation: He thought it also needful to warn,
" that the wrath of God is not far off from them who make
" and cherish sinful communion, and partake of ministers
" sins, which in many places the scripture saith will bring
" wrath upon the people, Lev. x. 6. Isa. ix. 16. Isa. xliii.
" 27, 28. Jer. ii. 8, 9. Jer. xiv. 15, 16, &c." If the au-
" thor

* *Renwick's Life, p. 107.*

thor of the Essay thinks it his duty to attempt a discovery of the evil of schism, I hope I shall be excused, when I give my reasons why I think our secession from the present judicatories of the church is both warrantable and necessary, and consequently why I cannot reckon that to be schism which he and many others call by that name; but, unless the question is clearly stated, the reader cannot have a distinct view of the case as it stands betwixt the present judicatories of the church and the seceding ministers: Therefore, in order to this, I shall first offer a few observes concerning the church and church-communion; and then I shall examine into the way how the author of the Essay states the question, and shew that it is mis-stated by him; and, under this head, I may take notice of some lax principles with respect to church-communion, that are either directly affirmed, or by just and necessary consequence flow from some positions laid down in the Essay; and, in the last place, I shall endeavour to declare the true state of the present question.

S E C T. I.

Some Observes concerning the Church and Church-Communion.

THE terms *Church*, and *Church-Communion*, do frequently cast up in the present question: I shall therefore offer a few observes concerning them, which may be necessary for the reader to have in his eye, if he would be informed in the question betwixt the present judicatories, and those who have stated a secession from them; and I hope I shall advance nothing upon this head, but what is agreeable unto our laudable acts and constitutions, and what sound Presbyterians, who know their own principles, will readily agree unto.

1. When I speak of the church in the present question, I do not mean the church invisible, but the visible body of Christ; and this may be considered either as it is catholic and universal, or it may be taken for particular churches.

2. The catholic visible church consists of all those thro'out the world that profess the true religion, and of their children; and is the kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ, the house and family of God, out of which there is no ordinary possibility of salvation; according to our Confession, Chap. XXV.

Section

Sect. II. Unto this catholic visible church, the Lord Christ, her only Head, Lord and Lawgiver, hath given the ministry, oracles, and ordinances of God, for the gathering and perfecting of the saints in this life to the end of the world; according to the foresaid chapter of our Confession, Sect. III. and the scriptures cited.

3. As there is a catholic visible church, so there are particular visible churches; and these are either national, provincial, presbyterial, or parochial: And tho' every particular church may be considered as a visible body, in respect of its own members, order and government; yet at the same time, if any particular church, whether national or presbyterial, is considered with relation to the whole visible body of Christ, it is only a member thereof; that is, every particular visible church stands in relation to the catholic body, as a part unto the whole: This necessarily flows from the unity or oneness of the whole visible body of Christ.

4. Particular churches, which are members of the catholic church, are more or less pure, according as the doctrine of the gospel is taught and embraced, ordinances administered, and public worship performed more or less purely in them; according to our Confession, Chap. XXV. Sect. IV. As in the natural body a member may be impotent and inactive, or may be seized with a dangerous and corrupt ulcer; this may be the case likewise of particular churches which are members of the catholic body. As for instance, A national church, as she is represented in her judicatories, may fall into such a state of inactivity, whereby she does not at all answer the ends and designs of her erection into a church-state, namely, the glory of God, the support and defence of the truths of the gospel, and the edification of the body of Christ: Yea, a national church may so far decline from that soundness and purity she has once attained unto, that she may be justly reckoned an impure or corrupt member of the catholic body.

5. The divine warrant for national or presbyterial churches is not disputed by these with whom I have immediately to do: The reader, for his own satisfaction upon the head of national churches, may consult the judicious Mr. Durham in his commentary on Rev. xi. 15. where he will find the question handled succinctly, and with a great deal of judgment; and, upon the head of presbyterial churches, he may consider what is said in our *Form of Church government*:

But it may not be amiss here to observe what is meant by a national church: A national church, says Mr. Durham in the place above mentioned, is the combination of a nation as one unto God; "and nations or kingdoms are said to become the Lord's upon the sounding of the seventh trumpet, as formerly they were Antichrist's." Formerly they belonged to Antichrist, by an outward visible profession of the doctrines of the church of Rome, the practice of her idolatrous worship, and subjection to the Papal power and authority; but now they become the Lord's, "by the public profession of truth in its purity, and by having his public worship and ordinances in their purity, nationally among them." The reverend and worthy author of the *Defence of National Churches*, published anno 1729. p. 13. describes a national church thus, "When a nation with its rulers and generality of the people do agree to receive the gospel, profess its truths, and subject themselves unto its ordinances; that is, when they join and unite together in one ecclesiastic body, for maintaining the same system of doctrines, and rules for church-government and worship, as they judge most agreeable to the word of God." As a national church respects those who are joined together in the same civil society by the providence of God, who hath before determined the bounds of our habitation; so it concludes their union and conjunction together in one body ecclesiastic, for the maintainance of the same system of doctrines, and rules for church government and worship, or, which is the same, their joint profession and confession of the same faith, and embracing the same ordinances of worship, and submitting to the same order and government.

6. The public profession and confession of the truths of God, is one of the peculiar characteristics of the church of the living God; she is designed *the pillar and ground of truth*, 1 Tim. iii. 15. that is, the church is a public witness unto the truth, a public keeper and notifier of the truth. In the above words there is an allusion unto a custom among the ancients, who in their public places and courts of judgment had pillars unto which the edicts of magistrates were fixed, that all might see, read and know them: And by *truth*, in this place, we are not only to understand the doctrines which ought to be believed, but likewise the truth as it concerns the worship that ought to be practised, and that order and government

government that should be exercised in the house of God; all the acts, statutes, ordinances and institutions of the Head and Lord of the house, ought to be plainly and clearly published, especially by the church-representative, or by the office-bearers of the church in their judicative capacity, that they may be read, known, and embraced by all the members of the body. The church ought to bear testimony and witness, in a particular and express manner, to these truths that are controverted and opposed by the subtilty of men, or the wickedness of hell; this is a debt that Zion owes to her God, to make public profession and confession of him and his truths, Psal. cxlvii. 12. *Praise thy God, O Zion*; or, as it is emphatically rendred in our paraphrase which we sing, *Zion, thy God confesses*. As this is a special charge given unto her, so it is the church's greatest dignity and honour to confess him; if she refuses or neglects to confess his controverted and opposed truths, he is exceedingly dishonoured, and she does not answer one of the primary ends and designs of her erection and constitution upon this earth. When the Lord did with an out-stretched arm bring the Protestant churches out of Spiritual Babylon, they came forth with a testimony in their hands against the abominations of Rome; the several churches emitted their confessions of faith, and in them the banner was displayed for truth, and the standard of a public testimony was lifted up against the abominable doctrines, and the tyrannical usurpations of the church of Rome. That harmony is beautiful which we may observe amongst the several Confessions of the reformed churches, and an evidence that there was a special presence of God with them, and also of a plentiful effusion of the holy Spirit upon them; it is likewise a hopeful presage, that when the Lord turns again the captivity of Zion, and when his holy arm shall give the blow unto the throne of the beast, the several churches and their watchmen shall see eye to eye, and that with the voice together they shall sing. I conclude this head with observing, That the national church of Scotland, in her reforming times, was a confessing church in a peculiar manner: Not only was her first Confession of Faith received and published, as the confession of the faith of the states of Scotland, with the inhabitants of the same, professing Christ Jesus his holy gospel; but this confession was ratified with a solemn oath, frequently renewed, as also the abominations of Popery were particularly

cularly abjured. Hence all ranks of persons, and all the members of this church come to the years of discretion, did, by their hands lifted up to the most high God, become confessors, in an eminent way and manner, of the Lord Jesus, and of his precious truths: This solemn profession and confession of the truth was in reforming times the outward bond of union and communion, both unto church members among themselves, and unto the office bearers of this church in her several judicatories; but whether the church of Scotland at this day, in her several members, or as she is represented in her present judicatories, is a witnessing and confessing church, in opposition to the errors and corruptions of the present age, will afterward fall under our consideration.

7. There is an union and communion catholic and universal amongst all Christians, considered as such; and an ecclesiastic union and communion amongst members of one particular organical church, considered as members of that church. This observe I take from Mr. Shiells on church communion, p. 25. a book frequently cited in the Essay. The same worthy author likewise observes, that "organic communion must be on stricter terms than catholic communion with others that are not members of the same organic church." He adds, "If we were in Afric or Asia, we would join with all Christians holding the same fundamental testimony against Jews, Turks and Pagans, tho' not with heretics." And it is plain, that all Christians have union and communion together, in so far as they hold the fundamental testimony of Christianity against declared infidels; in like manner all Protestants, in so far as they hold the Protestant testimony against the errors and corruptions of the church of Rome. But tho' all the members of the catholic visible church, professing the true religion, have union and communion among themselves, in their joint profession of the same Lord, and the same faith, and in receiving the same baptism; yet, as a considerable divine expresses himself*, "The obligation that lies upon members of the same particular visible church, to hold communion with these with whom they are externally joined, is not without its bounds and measures; we are joined together under certain conditions." The conditions and means of our external union and conjunction,

* *Le Claud's Hist. Def. part 3. p. 9.*

this particular organic church, are, one Confession of Faith, one Form and Order of Church-government and Discipline, one Directory for Worship; or, The outward ligament and bond of our union and conjunction in this national church, is that system of pure and sound doctrine, that order of government, worship and discipline, held forth from the word of God, in our Confession of Faith, Books of Discipline, Form of Church government, and Directory for Worship, in the profession and obedience of which all ranks of persons in this land have solemnly bound and obliged themselves to abide, by the National Covenant of Scotland, and the Solemn League and Covenant of the three nations. Whether this bond of our ecclesiastical union is maintained by this national church in her present judicatories, and consequently whether or not the conditions of our union and conjunction in one ecclesiastical body do now subsist, will likewise fall afterwards under our consideration.

S E C T. II.

The Question mis-stated, and several lax Principles anent Church-communion maintained, in the Essay.

WHEN the commission of the general assembly did by their sentence, as is noticed already, thrust out four ministers from communion with the present judicatories, the said ministers did at the same time declare a secession from them, and that because they were carrying on a course of defection from our reformed and covenanted principles. Therefore it is a very great mistake in the Essay, and a mis-stating of the question, when he affirms, that violent intrusions were at that time the chief ground of the complaint, page 6. Violent intrusions were indeed one of the grounds of complaint; but many other steps of defection were likewise complained of, as appears from what has been narrated in the introduction; and, amongst others, the injury that was done to many important doctrinal truths by the conduct of judicatories, when gross errors were brought to their bar: And, I humbly judge, the blow that was thereby given to the truths, held forth from the word of God in our Confession of Faith, deserves to be reckoned amongst the chief grounds of complaint;

plaint; tho', as we shall afterwards see, this, as well as other steps of defection, make but very little impression upon the author of this Essay. From what is above observed, it is also plain, that it was not violent intrusions, it was not the act 1732, neither was it any other particular step of defection, considered abstractly and by themselves, upon which the secession was stated; but a complex course of defection, both in doctrine, government and discipline, carried on with a high hand by the present judicatories of this church, justifying themselves in their procedure, and refusing to be reclaimed. Hence in our first testimony, wherein we give the reasons at large for our protestation, bearing our secession from the present judicatories, we lay the charge against them, "Of breaking down our beautiful Presbyterian constitution, and of pursuing such measures as actually corrupt, or have the most direct tendency to corrupt, the doctrine contained in our Confession of Faith, as also of imposing new terms of communion;" and we observe, "That all this is done contrary to their solemn engagements when ordained to the holy ministry, notwithstanding that the ordinary means had been used to reclaim them, till at length matters were come to such a height, that we were excluded from keeping up a standing testimony against their defections in a way of communion with them." The above charge is made good by arguments taken from matters of fact in the foresaid paper: I may leave it to the unprejudiced reader who has been at pains to inform himself in this controversy, to judge, whether or not the author of the Essay has ever once entered into the question or argument as it is more fully stated in the foresaid paper.

The author of the Essay proceeds in his fifth chapter to his arguments against separation. Tho' he has never stated the question concerning secession, as the case stands betwixt the present judicatories and the associate presbytery; yet, lest he alledge that this is done in his first four chapters, in the several principles and propositions that he has laid down, I shall briefly examine some of his leading principles, which, I hope to make evident, are partly general and ambiguous, and others of them exceeding lax, and therefore, instead of giving us a just view of the state of the question, have a native tendency, either to intangle and insnare his reader, or to amuse and perplex him.

The Essay is begun with the following assertion; "That separation from a true church is not only a great misery, but a grand sin." This is every where affirmed thro' the Essay, as p. 7. Prop. 3. "Tho' separation from a true church be a great sin, &c." and very much weight and stress is laid upon it. But the author has given no determinate sense of the terms *true church*, nay, they are used by our author in a very general and equivocal sense. Our divines, in speaking of the church, tell us, That a particular visible church may be considered, either as she is a true church, or as she is a pure church; and, when they speak of a pure church, they do not mean a perfect church, but a church that, thro' the goodness and mercy of God, has attained to such a measure of conformity to the divine pattern, in her doctrine, worship, government and discipline, that the denomination of pure may be justly given unto her, tho' she has not yet attained unto a state of perfection. Thus the learned Turretine, in the place cited by our author *, *Essay* p. 4. distinguishes betwixt a true church and a pure church; after giving the marks of a true church, he observes, "That sometimes hay and stubble may be built upon the foundation, and yet a church is not thereby immediately deprived of the dignity of being a church; and, tho' she cannot be any more reckoned a pure church, she does not therefore cease to be a true church." Our presbyterian divines have likewise observed, That tho' a church may have all these things that are essential to the being of a church, yet there may be ground of secession from her. So Mr. Forester, in his book cited by our author, affirms †, "Every separation is not sinful, even from a church which hath the essentials, yea, and more than the essentials." And consequently, according to this learned man, what our author advances, *Essay* p. 4. is nowise to the purpose, when he says, "I humbly think, none who knows what orthodox divines reckon essential to the being of a true church of Christ, but will readily own all that and much more is to be found in the church of Scotland." Our author has never told us what orthodox divines reckon essential to the being of a church; but tho' he should prove that the church of Scotland in her present judicatories

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* *Tur. Loc. 18. Quest. 12. S. 7. † Rec. Inst. Dial. 3. p. 7.*

dicatories has the essentials, yea, more than the essentials it will not hence follow, according to Mr. Forester, that there is no ground of Secession from them. If then by a true church, and a church having the things that are reckoned essential to the being of a true church, our author means a church wherein such doctrines as are absolutely necessary to be known and believed in order to salvation, are held, at least by external visible profession; then I affirm it is false, that a separation from such a church is always a great misery and grand sin; for this reason, That such hay and stubble may be built upon the foundation, and such corruptions both in government and discipline may be introduced, as may make it necessary and warrantable to depart from communion with her. Thus the church of England holds the truth in her doctrinal articles; but, besides her corruptions in government, worship and discipline, she has always declined to testify against many gross and hainous errors which have been vented and taught by her members, and which are directly contrary to her own received and approved articles: Therefore a secession has been justly stated from her by a considerable body of dissenters in England and Ireland, by some of them upon all of the grounds above-mentioned, tho' by the generality of them on account of her corruption in her government and worship. But if, by a true church, our author means a church that has attained to the purity above-mentioned; As this is the meaning of the terms *true kirk*, in the 18th article of our first Confession of Faith, as is evident from the marks and characters there given, so our author will never be able to prove that they are to be found in this national church as she is now represented in her present judicatories. The characters of a true church, mentioned in the fore-said article of our Confession, hold forth unto us a pure and sound church; a church holding the Head displaying the banner of truth against the adversaries of truth; a church wherein ecclesiastical discipline is exercised, for the edification, and not for the destruction of the body of Christ; and finally, a church wherein the seals of the covenant are dispensed by such as are lawfully called, and authorised by the Head and Lord of the house to feed the sheep of his pasture. But I have made it already appear in part, in the postscript to the letter on secession, that these characters do not agree to this national church in her present situation, and it may be more evident from what is afterwards to be advanced.

The author of the *Essay* proceeds in his second chapter to lay down sundry propositions anent separation. I shall pass his first proposition just now. His second proposition runs in the following terms; "*There may be different sentiments without separation.*" This is a fair general; But, when he comes to the illustration of it, he tells us, "As long as we see but in part, as we think others should allow us to differ from them, we ought to forbear such as differ from us, I mean, in things not fundamental." The terms fundamental and not fundamental likewise run throughout his whole *Essay*, as p. 16, 113, &c. But, as he gives us no determinate sense or meaning of the above terms, so he leaves us in the dark about this forbearance which he recommends, when the difference is in things not fundamental: Therefore I ask that he may explain himself about fundamentals, and let him tell us plainly whether he confines fundamentals unto doctrinal truths only, and if he gives up with the foundations of government and order in the house of God; or if his meaning be, that, when the foundations of doctrine are maintained, we must forbear a testimony when the foundations of order and government are subverted. If he or any shall affirm, that we must continue in conjunction with such, or forbear a testimony against them, who are subverting the foundations of government in the house of God, it is plainly contrary to the scriptures he names, Phil. iii. 16. *Whereto we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule.* If we forbear to testify in the case mentioned, it is plain we depart from what we have attained unto, and consequently do not walk by the rule. It is contrary to Eph. iv. 2. *Forbearing one another in love.* It would be a dishonour done to the Head of the church, and the greatest act of unkindness unto such as bear the character of office bearers, to suffer them to raze the foundations of government and discipline, without a suitable testimony against them. Again, when our author pleads for forbearance in things not fundamental, must no testimony be given against doctrinal errors, except such as are strictly fundamental? Our divines do very well observe, That there are some truths that are like the stones that ly immediately upon the foundation; and, if these are pulled out, the whole building falls to the ground, as if the foundation were removed. Likewise, is there not a near connection betwixt one divine truth and another? And, have not some truths that probably
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some may reckon not fundamental, a very near influence upon such as they cannot refuse are fundamental? As for instance, How many sacred truths are connected with that of the federal headship of the first Adam? The denial of this one truth brings forth abundance of dangerous errors in divinity, yea, even such as may strike at the foundation. Our reformed divines have justly refused to answer the unreasonable demand of the Papists, who, in their controversial writings against us, have required a list of these truths that we reckon fundamental, for the above reason, viz. the near connection of divine truths with one another; and, for the very same reason, I humbly judge, that it is very dangerous to plead with our author for a forbearance in these things that are not fundamental: Besides the difficulty that there is in determining what these truths are that are not fundamental, the forbearance pled for opens a door for ecclesiastical union and conjunction in a church, when she is letting go many important truths which she has once received and confessed. I shall only add upon this head, That if the author of the *Essay*, or any others, shall be found pricking out the *pinnings* of the building of the Lord's house, or breaking down the walls of his vineyard, they deserve not to be joined with in building the house, or keeping the vineyard, more than they who are rearing up a fabrick without a foundation, or pulling up the vines; yea, in many cases the former are more dangerous than the latter.

I have already made an observe on his third proposition. His fourth is as follows; "Communion may be kept with a church, tho' her faults and corruptions be many." What is immediately added, for illustration of this proposition, leaves us still in the dark about the true state of the question: "For (says he) we are not to expect a perfect or faultless church here upon earth." But tho' we are not to expect a perfect or faultless church, must we therefore continue in conjunction with such judicatories as are carrying on a course of defection, and thereby involving themselves and church-members in many corruptions, and at the same time justifying themselves in their backslidings, and refusing to be reclaimed? As this is the question before us, so the human authorities he brings forth upon this proposition are nowise to the purpose, as the reader may easily see. As for the scripture-examples of the churches of Corinth, Pergamos, &c.

they are frequently cast up by our author; but they teach no such thing as conjunction with a church in the circumstances above-mentioned, as may be made more fully afterwards to appear. The words of our confession, Chap. 25. Sect. 5. cited by our author, *The purest churches under heaven are subject both to mixture and error*, are most true; and it is likewise a certain truth which follows, *Some have so degenerated as to become no churches of Christ, but synagogues of Satan*: But it nowise follows from any of the above words of our confession, that we are to continue in conjunction with a church, when she degenerates from truth to error, or departs from her purity, and involves herself in corruption.

Our author's fifth proposition is, *Tho' we are not to separate from a true church of Christ, altho' her faults or corruptions be many; yet we are obliged to separate from all the corruptions which may be in a church*. He adds, "To separate from corruptions is one thing, and to separate from the corrupted is another thing." In the illustration of this proposition, we have several warm expressions against the least compliance with any thing that is sinful; yet our author's proposition appears to me to be equally ambiguous with those I have already mentioned: It supposeth a church may be a true church, and yet that her faults and corruptions may be many; she must then certainly be a very impure church: But, if *true church* is taken in the large sense above-mentioned, I shall not controvert it, that an impure church may be called a true church. Therefore, if our author had spoke plainly upon this proposition, he ought to have told us what kind of faults and corruptions he means, when he tells us, *We are not to separate from a true church tho' her faults and corruptions be many*. If by faults and corruptions he means personal defects and blemishes in the walk and conversation of professors, I shall grant him that these are not ground of secession from a true church; but if by faults and corruptions he means dangerous errors or gross scandals which a church refuseth to purge out notwithstanding of warnings and admonitions given her, or defections and backslidings carried on in her ecclesiastic capacity from points of reformation once attained unto, then his proposition is what we use to call a begging of the question. When he tells us, *That to separate from corruptions is one thing, and to separate from the corrupted is another*; I ask him, can he separate from the corruptions

ruptions of the church of England, without departing at the same time from communion in worship with the members of that corrupt church? In like manner, can he give the right-hand of fellowship, by a conjunction in ecclesiastical judicatories with intruders, Arminians, or Arians, or even with such as refuse to display the banner of a testimony against such corrupters and their corruptions, and after all say, he is pure? Can one take a viper in his bosom, and receive no hurt? *Can a man take fire in his bosom, and his clothes not be burnt? or, can one goupon hot coals, and his feet not be burnt?* Prov. vi. 27, 28.

His sixth proposition is, "While we can maintain communion with a church without sin, and while sinful terms of communion are not required of us, we are never to separate." This proposition consists of two distinct propositions, and therefore I shall consider them distinctly. The first whereof is, *While we can maintain communion with a church without sin, we are never to separate.* This is very true, as it is laid in general terms; but still the question is, If we can maintain communion, without sin, with the judicatories of a church, carrying on a course of defection in their judicative capacity? This is what the author must maintain, if he speaks any thing to the purpose against the seceding brethren; and, if this is the meaning of his proposition, he still begs what is in question: But, for confirming his proposition, he tells us, "Mr. Rutherford, when speaking of the Popish ceremonies of the church of Old England, says, We teach separation from these ceremonies to be lawful, but not from the churches." Even so the seceding brethren affirm, that secession from the present judicatories is lawful, but not from the church of Scotland. He adds from Mr. Durham on scandal *, "When men may unite without personal guilt, or accession to the defects or guilt of others, there may and ought to be union, even tho' there be failings and defects of several kinds in a church." But the question is, If we can have union and conjunction with the present judicatories, as parts and members of the same ecclesiastic body with them, without personal guilt, or accession to their guilt and defects? We may be accessory to the guilt of others, in more cases than our author seems to apprehend: As for instance, If our union with a backsliding party strengthens the hands of the con-

* On Scand. Part. 4. Chap. 7. p. m. 324:

unct ecclesiastic body in their backsliding course, we are thereby accessory to their guilt: though we should abhor it with our hearts, and testify against it with our mouths, yet, we are saying, A confederacy, to them to whom we ought not to say, a confederacy. Again, If our union with a backsliding body obstructs our discharge of these duties which our office does oblige us unto, we are not only accessory to their guilt, but are thereby deeply involved in personal guilt: Therefore the judicious Durham, in the place cited, tells us of some things that may justly fear a tender conscience from uniting; and, amongst others, "When some engagement is required for the future, which doth restrain from any duty called for, or that may afterward be called for." And it may be made evident in its proper place, that union and conjunction with the present judicatories, doth in its own nature, tho' no express engagement should be required, lay ministers under a restraining bond, inconsistent with their duty in the present situation of the church of Scotland.

I proceed to the other branch of his sixth proposition, which is, *While sinful terms of communion are not required of us, we are never to separate.* I shall consider, together with this, his 11th proposition, on account of their affinity, "Tho' the greatest part of a church, ministers and people, should make sad defection, that will not be sufficient ground of separation from her, *while no sinful terms of communion are required of us.*" Our author in the whole of his reasonings pleads, that there should be no separation where no sinful terms of communion are required; his arguments against secession do frequently turn upon this. Tho' I do not grant it, that the present judicatories have not imposed sinful terms of communion upon ministers and church-members; yet I cannot admit of our author's proposition, and that because church-communion is thereby stated upon negative terms, whereas something positive is required unto warrantable church communion: Particularly, as I observed in the first Section, a public profession and confession of the truths of God, is one of the peculiar Characteristicks of the church of the living God; the church unto which we may warrantably join ourselves, ought to maintain and profess the true doctrine, and the true faith, according to the citation given us from Mr. Gillespie, *Essay* p. 3. and all our reformed divines have always stated church-communion upon positive terms,

terms, as may appear from the 18th article of our first confession. If the most part of the members of a church should maintain and profess Arminian errors, or Arian blasphemies, and at the same time do not require it of us, as a term of communion with them, to make the same profession; must we therefore join in communion with them? or, must we own ourselves members of the same ecclesiastical body with them? Where is then our confession of Christ, or of the truths of Christ, before a perverse and wicked generation? The Christians of old were very cautious of communion with the erroneous: When the Arian heresy prevailed in the fourth century, the orthodox refused church communion with the Arians; the great Athanasius, in the several places where he preached, exhorted the faithful to shun the fellowship of the Arians, and to have fellowship only with them who confessed the true faith*. Yea, they would not sit in the same council or synod with the Arians: Hence Paphnutius the confessor, when he observed Maximus a godly and orthodox man (as Rufinus reports) thro' too much simplicity sitting in the synod of Tyre, composed of such as were of the Arian side, the said Paphnutius went boldly into the midst of the synod, and said, *Te non patiar sedere, &c. i. e.* "O Maximus, "I will not suffer thee to sit in a synod of Malignants, nor "to enter amongst the workers of iniquity;" and forthwith brought him out of the synod†. But, according unto our author's principles, they should have both kept their seats in that synod, and contended against the Arian faction because no sinful terms of communion were imposed upon them. Doctor Owen observes in his enquiry into the original, &c. p. 179. that the "Socinians under a pretence of forbearance, "love and mutual toleration, do offer us the communion of "their churches, wherein there is somewhat of order and "discipline commendable; yet (says he) it is unlawful to join "in church fellowship or communion with them, on account "of their pernicious errors," some of which he mentions. I had occasion to notice in the printed missive, that a considerable body of the dissenters in Ireland have rejected Confessions of Faith, as tests of orthodoxy, or soundness in the faith; and, in their room, the only term of church-communion which

* *Socrates Hist. Ecclesiast. Lib. 2. Cap. 19.*

† *Ruf. Hist. Ecclesiast. Lib. 1. Cap. 17.*

which they require, is our acknowledgement of the truth, in express scripture terms: This cannot be reckoned a sinful term of communion; and yet, in the mean time, Arians, Socinians, Arminians and others, who wrest the scriptures to their own destruction, will not refuse to make a Confession of their Faith in express scripture-terms; but their sense and meaning of scripture-words, is quite opposite to the scope and design of the holy Spirit in the scriptures: And therefore, I humbly judge, our worthy brethren in Ireland have scripture and reason on their side, to support them in their conduct and practice, when they have declared a secession from such who have laid aside Confessions of Faith, and in their associating together in distinct presbyteries from them. I hope the author of the Essay will not dispute with me the lawfulness and necessity of Confessions of Faith, as tests of soundness in the faith, in the present situation of the church: And, if they are warrantable and necessary, it is not sufficient to justify our continuing in communion with any church whatsoever, that she requires not expressly any sinful terms of communion, unless there is likewise a joint profession and acknowledgement of the truth as it is in Christ Jesus, in opposition to the errors of the time, and to erroneous seducers: Therefore, for the above reasons, I must refuse and reject our author's above principle, upon which he lays so much stress and weight, and which he frequently repeats in his *Essay*, as lax and dangerous, and as having a tendency to make the church of the living God a receptacle of the grossest errors, providing it is not required as a term of communion that such errors be received and embraced by church-members. And, from what is above observed, the reader may easily perceive the ambiguity and deceit of our author's common topics that run thro' his whole *Essay*, *That separation from a true church, or where the essentials of a true church are continued, is sinful; and that it is unlawful to separate from a church which requires no sinful terms of communion.* As for the first part of the last above-mentioned proposition, "Tho' the greatest part of a church, ministers and people, should make sad defection; that will not be sufficient ground of separation from her." For confirmation of this proposition, he gives us the case of the church of Sardis: And this leads me to observe, that there is an ambiguity in the word defection, as our author makes use of it in his proposition. If
by

by defection he means degeneracy in a church from the inward principle of grace, or falling away from these measures and degrees of the exercise of grace once attained unto by church members, and that in the room thereof a dead, lifeless and formal profession prevails; I shall readily grant that this cannot in itself be judged a sufficient ground of secession from any church whatsoever, and that because, where a visible profession of the truth is kept up, the deadness or want of liveliness in that profession, falls only under the cognisance of the faithful and true witness. And this was the case of the church of Sardis: She kept up her profession of the truth, therefore it is said she had a name to live; but in the meantime the faithful and true witness, who only best knew her state, finds her to be dead, or, as our author expresses it, formal and hypocritical, having fallen from her former liveliness, zeal and tenderneſs. But if by defection, in the proposition, is meant degeneracy in a church, or the defection of most part of ministers and church members from the doctrine, government and discipline of the Lord's house, as it has been once received, professed and practised amongst them, this is not the sin charged upon the church of Sardis: She retained still her outward visible profession, as has been said; and upon this account she had so great a name amongst the other churches, that they reckoned her a living church. And it is concerning defections of the latter kind that the question at present is

I shall leave our author's propositions, as they are laid in his second Chapter, when I have observed, that, in the illustration of his eighth proposition, he tells us, That the reverend Mr. Forester cites Mr. Durham on scandal, acknowledging, that, when scandals become excessive, we may depart to another congregation *. And may not I, for the very same reason, affirm, that when scandals become excessive in a national church, and when the judicatories refuse to purge themselves or the church from these scandals, it is lawful and necessary to depart from communion with them, lest, by continuing with the same lump, we also be leavened thereby: since our author has mentioned the reverend Mr. Forester, I cannot but notice, that, if he had seriously considered the excellent reasonings of that learned man, and his strong pleadings (in that part of his book which he cites) for separation from a corrupt church, I do not think he would have put per-

* *Recl. Instr. Conf. Dial. 3. p. 7. 8.*

to paper on the head of separation: The most part of his arguments are laid directly against our author's principles; and if, in many places of his book, we shall, for *conformists*, read *present judicatories*, he proves all that the seceding brethren plead for. And, in the page out of which our author takes his citation, Mr. Forester tells us of several cases, in which separation is not schism; as first, "If it be from those, tho' never so many, who are drawing back, and in so far as drawing back from whatever piece of duty, and integrity is attained; for this is still to be held fast, according to many scripture-commands." And this is what the seceding ministers plead for. The same author has much more to excellent purpose upon this head, which the reader, if he pleases, may consult at leisure.

The author of the Essay proceeds, in his third chapter, to give instances of some things which are just ground for mourning and lamentation, yet are not sufficient causes of separation. His first instance is, Essay, p. 17. "Albeit there be errors, and errors of a hainous nature, among some in a church, this is not sufficient ground of separation from that church, nay, not tho' these errors should remain uncensured." This proposition, as it is laid by our author without any limitation or restriction, appears to me to be very lax and dangerous; in regard it is one of the special ends and designs of God's rearing up and erecting a visible church for himself in the world, that he may be honoured and glorified by a public and open profession and acknowledgement of the truth: Therefore, if any particular visible church shall tolerate in her bowels errors of a hainous nature, she does not answer the end and design of infinite wisdom, love and grace in her erection and constitution; if errors of a hainous nature pass uncensured, the house of the living God becomes thereby a den of notorious thieves and robbers, and the church may be a society made up of infidels who deny the resurrection of the dead, or of Arians, Socinians, and the very worst heretics. I doubt not but in the purest churches error may spring up, as also the office-bearers may need to be excited and stirred up to their duty; this is the case with respect to the instance that he gives us from the church of Corinth: The apostle, in his first epistle, stirs up the office-bearers of that church to the exercise of discipline against the incestuous person; he chargeth likewise some in that church with

denying the resurrection of the dead: But then it deserves our consideration, that from his second epistle it is evident, that the Presbytery of Corinth had obeyed the apostolical admonition, and had repented of their negligence; they censured the incestuous person, and the censure had its desired effect; consequently this church was, in her ecclesiastic capacity, a reforming church, 2 Cor. ii. 6; 7. and vii. 8, 9. I likewise conclude, that the office bearers of the church of Corinth had discharged their duty, either in reclaiming such who denied the resurrection of the dead, or by a suitable testimony against such obstinate heretics; and that because of their sorrowing after a godly manner, in the place cited: as also, because in his second epistle he does not give the least hint, that this capital heresy which he had condemned, and charged some of them with, was remaining amongst them: And if the author of the Essay or any others will affirm that the heresy remained uncensured in Corinth, they accuse, not the apostle Paul only, but a greater, even our Lord Jesus Christ himself, who, by his Spirit speaking in the apostle, gives not the least reproof or admonition on that head in the second epistle, when they are supposed to slight the warning that was given them in the first. From what is observed it is evident, that our author's instance of the church of Corinth does not prove his proposition. Our author thinks fit sometimes to cite doctor Owen: I hope he cannot justly refuse me the same liberty; and therefore I shall subjoin the doctor's answer to the objection against separation from a corrupt church, from the case of the church of Corinth, in his piece on Schism, p. 265. He grants, that many abuses may enter into the best churches, and that secession is not to be immediately frated without attempts for remedy unto such disorders; and this the seceding ministers likewise yield: " But (says the doctor) " had the church of Corinth continued in the condition before-described, that notorious scandalous sins had went unpunished, unreproved, drunkenness continued and practised in the assemblies, men abiding by the denial of the resurrection, so overturning the whole gospel, and the church refusing to do her duty, and exercise her authority, to cast all these disorderly persons, upon her obstinacy, out of her communion; it had been the duty of every saint of God in that church to have withdrawn from it, to come out from among them, and not to have been par-

“taker of their sins, unless they were willing to partake of
 “their plague also, which upon such an apostacy would
 “certainly ensue.” Tho’ the chapter above-mentioned gives
 occasion for abundance of remarks, yet I shall not trouble
 the reader with them; only it deserves to be noticed, that,
 in all the instances he gives us of grounds of mourning and
 lamentation; we have none from the conduct of the present
 judicatories of the church of Scotland: He gives his opinion,
 that the act of assembly 1732 was a bad act, p. 21. but he
 no where reckons it a cause of mourning, even tho’ this act,
 albeit it is repealed, is to this very day justified practically,
 by the procedure of judicatories in this settlement of ministers;
 and likewise he makes some faint acknowledgement, that there
 may be much ground at this day to lament over a dead mini-
 stry in many places, p. 24. but he gives vent to his invec-
 tives against our reforming period, particularly against the
 assembly 1638, as p. 20, 21.

The author of the Essay goes on, in his fourth chapter, to
 instance several things reckoned just and sufficient causes for
 separation from a church. The first is, “When a church
 “turns heretical in her doctrine, maintaining such doctrines
 “in her standards as are everfive of the foundation, utterly
 “inconsistent with salvation; or denies such truths, without
 “the knowlege and faith whereof we cannot have life and
 “endless happiness.” He gives an instance in three funda-
 mental truths; I hope he does not pretend to give us a list
 of such truths as are fundamental. I have already observed,
 that the question about foundation truths is a very important
 one: All divine truths are so closely linked together, that it
 is not easy to determine the question about doctrines everfive
 of the foundation. I may transcribe, to this purpose, some
 emphatic words of the author of the *Fulfilling of the Scrip-
 tures*, Appen. p. 511, 512. “Truths, comparatively small,
 “may be great in their season, when they are the word of
 “his patience; yea, we may say, the lesser it seems, and of
 “mean value with many, it makes the Christian’s adherence
 “thereto a greater testimony. It is clear what a close con-
 “catenation there is amongst the truths of God held forth
 “in the scripture, that one part thereof cannot be taught
 “without a special prejudice to the whole; yea, it may be
 “said, every corruption of the truth hath an aim at the
 “very soul of religion, by a direct tendency thereto.”

But whereas our author affirms in his above proposition, that there is ground of separation from a church, when she maintains such doctrines in her standards as are everſive of the foundation: There is a queſtion that comes upon the field in the preſent diſpute, and that is, When the public ſtandards of a church are ſound, yet errors ſtriking at the foundation and everſive of that ſcheme of doctrine contained in her Confefſion of Faith, are brought to the bar of her judicatories but they reſuſe to condemn them as contrary to her ſtandards and give no ſuitable testimony againſt them; Whether or not in this caſe, that church is holding the foundation? And I am afraid, this will be found to be the ſtate of matters with the judicatories of this church; and, if this is the caſe, there is as much ground for ſeceſſion from them, as if doctrines everſive of the foundation were maintained in her ſtandards. A Confefſion of Faith is of no more uſe as a teſt of ſoundneſs in the faith in any church, yea, it is ſtriped of its principal uſe and deſign, if errors are vented and maintained everſive of the ſcripture-doctrines contained therein, and if the judicatories of a church reſuſe to declare ſo much.

But tho' the author of the Eſſay lays down the above proposition, That there is ground of ſeparation from a church when ſhe maintains ſuch doctrines in her ſtandards as are everſive of the foundation; yet we are at a loſs to know what his real ſentiments upon this head are. As the title of his chapter runs, he may be conſtructed to be taking upon himſelf the part of an hiſtorian, reporting ſeveral things which are reckoned juſt and ſufficient cauſes for ſeparation. They are reckoned, ſays he; but, by whom? He does not ſay expreſſly that he himſelf reckons them; and accordingly I find him once and again limiting and reſtricting the above proposition as p. 16. "When defection from the truth is made in fundamental, and the church's ſtandards of doctrine are corrupted, and we required to approve thereof." And, pag. 113. ſpeaking of this national church, he ſays, "If it were true that her declared or profeſſed doctrine is corrupted in fundamental points, and we required to approve thereof, I ſhould think it ſufficient ground of ſeparation." From the above inſtances, this author appears to me to be ſo ambiguous, that it is a difficulty where to fix him. Yet from the paſſages I have cited it appears very plain, that, in order to ſtate a ſeceſſion from a church on account of her errors

doctrines

doctrine, three things must concur; 1st, The errors must be of such a nature as are utterly inconsistent with salvation; 2nd, They must be maintained by a church in her standards; 3rd, tho' such gross errors should be maintained in her standards, yet we must not state a secession from her, unless, in the third place, she requires us to approve thereof. At this juncture, conjunction ought to be maintained, tho' she should make a public and open profession of errors utterly inconsistent with salvation, if she does not require it of her several members that they approve thereof. If this is not to establish a profane *syncretism* or coalition with the adversaries of truth, condemned by the primitive church, and by all reformed divines, let the unprejudiced world judge. According to our author's principles, he cannot state a secession from the church of Rome on account of her doctrinal errors, if she is pleased to give him such an indulgence as not to require him to approve of the same; and the last age did afford instances of the Popish party, their being willing to compromise matters with the reformed after such a manner*: Yea, according to our author's principles, there was no ground of secession from Rome on account of her gross doctrinal errors before the council of Trent, or at least before the third Lateran council, that condemned the doctrine of the Albigenes, who then witnessed for the truth in a way of secession from the church of Rome.

The second instance, which he says is reckoned sufficient ground of separation from a church, is idolatry in worship. In his illustration of this, he tells us, p. 27. "I am of their opinion, who think we are to separate from all false and corrupt worship in any church, tho' every corruption in worship is not sufficient ground of separation." Tho' he thinks fit to deliver his own opinion in this place, yet I am at a loss to understand how both parts of his above assertion can hang together. He tells us, We are to separate from all false and corrupt worship; and yet he says, Every corruption in worship is not ground of separation. I wish he had told us what is that corruption in worship that falls not under the universal, All false and corrupt worship; or that he had told us what corruption there is in the worship of God, which he judges is not a sufficient ground of separation: For my part, I humbly think it may be made evident, that, where-

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* *Turret. de Necess. Secess. Dissert. 5ta. Sect. 34.*

ever there is any corruption in the worship of God, it is a sufficient ground of separation from communion with the worshippers in their worship, in case they refuse to reform.

The third instance he gives of what is reckoned ground of secession, is laid in the following manner, "Tyranny in the government of a church is reckoned just ground of separation by some." I am sorry that I have occasion so often to notice the ambiguous manner in which this author delivers himself upon such a weighty and important subject. He says, Tyranny, &c. is reckoned by some; but, by whom? He should have told us plainly, whether or not he himself reckons it a just ground of separation from a church: This way of treating such a grave subject, has a native tendency to amuse or intangle his unthinking and unlearned reader. When he tells us, Tyranny is reckoned by some a just ground of separation; perhaps it is only by some two or three divines who have not duly considered the subject: And yet Mr. Shiells, on church-communion, mentions tyranny of government as one of the general grounds of separation, commonly allowed by all*. It is true, our author gives us an instance of one considerable divine, viz. Turretine, who mentions tyranny in government as a ground of separation: He has not directed us to the place, neither in this nor in the former page where he cites Turretine; but the reader will find the passages he cites, in his dispute upon the necessity of secession from the church of Rome†. Our author observes, That according to Turretine, "It is not every disorder in the government of a church which is ground of separation, but the most cruel tyranny, and intolerable persecution both of soul and body." But, as that learned divine in the place cited states the question concerning secession from the church of Rome, he sets his argument in as strong light as matter of fact could support the same; for it is truth, that the church of Rome was guilty of cruel tyranny, and intolerable persecution. But, to speak plain upon this head, our reforming divines allow tyranny in government to be a ground of secession from a church, though she has not arrived at the height of Roman cruelty and persecution; therefore Mr. Shiells in the place cited, when he mentions tyranny of government, which he says is commonly allowed by all to be o

* On Church-communion, p. 18.

† Disput. de Necess. Seceſſ. Quest. 1. Sect. 12.

of the grounds of separation, he explains it of tyranny, "en-
croaching upon the right of administration, and the exer-
cise of it then and there." But, that the question upon
the head of tyranny may be more clearly stated, I must ob-
serve, That a church may be said to be tyrannical in her go-
vernment, either when the form and model of her govern-
ment is tyrannical, or when she is tyrannical in the admini-
stration of her government. Our Presbyterian divines do ge-
nerally affirm, that Diocesan Episcopacy is a tyranny form
and model of government: And tho' Prelacy was not so ty-
rannical in its form and model before the year 1638, as when
it was re-introduced into this church in the year 1662, as I
shall afterwards shew; yet a secession was stated by faithful
and eminent ministers, even from that form and model of
Prelacy that obtained before the year 1638. And it is what
cannot be refused, that the bulk and body of Presbyterians
in Scotland did state a secession upon that form and model of
Prelatic government that was established in the year 1662;
and their refusing communion with the Prelatic church of
Scotland, was made a handle of for that violent persecution
that was raised against them. But, according to our au-
thor's way of stating the case anent tyranny in government,
unless there is most cruel and habitual tyranny, with intole-
rable persecution of soul or body, there is no ground of se-
cession from a church on the head of tyranny; yea further,
according to our author's way of reasoning, it appears to me,
that there was no ground of secession from the Prelatic church
of Scotland purely upon her form and model of government;
at least, that church members might have entertained com-
munion in worship with that church: Especially when it is
considered, that, during the late times of Prelacy, the cere-
monies of the church of England had no place in her worship.

Again, a church may be said to be tyrannical in her go-
vernment, when the administration of her government is ty-
rannical: As for instance, Tho' Presbyterian church-govern-
ment, as to its form and model, is divine; yet if, under the
shadow of the said government, a lordly and magisterial pow-
er is exercised over the heritage of God, if the flock of Christ
are ruled with rigour, if the keys of government and disci-
pline are perverted; in these cases the administration is tyran-
nical, and the government is not a whit better than if its form
and model were Prelatical. We use to say, *Corruptio optimi*

peffima. This tyrannical administration of the government lays a just foundation for secession from church-judicatories who are walking quite contrary to the end and design of their erection and constitution in the church, and who thereby forfeit their claim to the exercise of the keys of government and discipline in the house of God: And that this is the state of matters in the present judicatories, may be made evident afterwards. I shall only add further, for clearing this head. That it is not sessions, presbyteries, synods and general assemblies, that makes us truly a Presbyterian church, but the free access of church-members with their grievances unto these courts; and the exercise of ministerial power and authority in them, for the edification of the body of Christ, for the redress of their grievances, for the removal of offences whereby the flock of Christ may be hurt or stumbled, for preserving the institutions of Christ in their purity, for maintaining that liberty wherewith Christ hath made his people free, and for purging the church of such errors or erroneous persons whereby the whole body is in danger to be leavened. If power and authority is not exercised in the said judicatories, for these and the like valuable ends, to the honour and glory of the Head of the church; or if it is exercised by the judicatories of a church unto quite contrary ends and purposes; what remains but a Prelatic government, under a Presbyterian name and shadow?

The fourth instance given in the Essay is concerning the intrusion of ministers, p. 29. "Some, says he, make the intrusion of ministers upon Christian congregations a ground of separation." He owns that the charge of violent intrusions "is a charge from which the church of Scotland can least be vindicated of any thing laid to her charge since the revolution, considering how many settlements have been made when congregations were reclaiming since the restoring patronages *anno 1712*." p. 30. What he adds concerning the stop that has been put to such violent settlements I shall afterwards consider. But he further adds "Whatever ground there is for lamentation, there is no sufficient ground for separation from the church of Scotland notwithstanding of such intrusions, whatever some particular congregations may have to say for vindicating their practice in not attending upon the ministry of such as are violently thrust in upon them." Here again our author

pervect

overts the true state of the question, in regard the present
 judicatories of this national church must be considered as car-
 rying on, authorizing and supporting violent settlements, not-
 withstanding of manifold remonstrances against their conduct
 and practice, both by ministers and other church-members :
 and consequently the question is, Whether or not this, with
 other acts of tyranny in the administration that may be af-
 forwards named, justly infer that the present judicatories are
 tyrannical in their government, that our secession from them
 necessary and warrantable? Our author endeavours to im-
 press his readers with his great zeal against violent intrusions ;
 yet he thinks fit to make an apology for his brethren that are
 active in carrying on violent settlements, when he tells us,
 32. " Tho' I am not to vindicate them, yet sundry of our
 brethren who have gone lengths in appearing for candi-
 dates having presentations, which others cannot but con-
 demn, have declared, Was it not for the strait the church
 is in from the grievance of patronage, which they profess
 is a grievance to them as well as others, they had been as
 averse from countenancing such settlements as any." It
 is a very mean apology for them, to tell the world that the
 grievance of patronage (that is, the civil law establishing pa-
 tronages) has led them to counteract the laws of the only Lord
 and Lawgiver of Zion. If our author had dealt faithfully
 with his brethren, and according to the great zeal that he
 professes, he ought plainly to have told them that they should
 suffer rather than sin : But, that he may still extenuate their
 sin, he likewise adds, " They affirm, the gravaminous law
 of patronages constrained our church judicatories, even in
 the best and purest times of reformation, to the like mea-
 sures." Our author must needs have a good deal of assur-
 ance, when he reports, without a just remark upon it, that
 intruding brethren affirm, that the judicatories of this
 church in her reforming times pursued the like measures
 with the present judicatories in the settlement of ministers.
 This is a most injurious reflection upon them. Can his bre-
 thren give one single instance of their pursuing the like mea-
 sures with the assembly 1737, in their act and sentence anent
 the settlement of the parish of Denny? besides many other
 particular instances that might be given. Or, can our author
 or his brethren give any instance of aggrieved and oppressed
 congregations coming before our general assemblies in our re-
 forming

forming times, with a loud cry of oppression on the account of the violent settlement of ministers amongst them? But how many instances have we had of this kind before our national assemblies within these twenty years by-past? Yet he tells us, *They affirm*, that our church-judicatories in our present times of reformation took the like measures with the present; and, if it is not truth which they affirm, what end does our author propose to himself by reporting it in his Essay without a just remark upon it, unless it is that he may exonerate their sin?

Upon this head of the intrusion of ministers, the Essay deserves, page 29. "That sundry of the dissenters from the church of England have judged the want of a free choice in the election of their own pastors, is enough to vindicate them in separating from the communion of that church." But it seems he has not found a Scots Presbyterian divine that makes the intrusion of ministers a ground of separation. Since our author thinks fit to deal so much in authorities, shall give him two testimonies, upon this head, from an author whom he justly commends, viz. Mr. Shiells on *Church communion*, who, p. 18. mentions "four general grounds of separation commonly allowed by all, *heresy in doctrine*, " *idolatry* or breach of the second command in the matter and manner of worship, *intrusion* or *tyranny* of government, and *schism* or a divided government." This worthy author is pleading for communion with the ministry about the time of the revolution, and he applies the four general grounds in the following manner; speaking of the ministers at that time he says, "For as none can doubt their right to administer all ordinances, so there is none of these ordinances perverted by them either in matter or manner, since they are not erroneous in doctrine, nor do break the second commandment in worship, nor intruders or tyrannical, nor schismatical in discipline or government." I heartily wish that we could say as much concerning the present ministry and judicatories of this church. From the above words it is plain that intruders, and tyrannical, are one and the same with Mr. Shiells; as also, that intrusion, or tyranny in government when it prevails in a church, is a ground of separation commonly allowed by all. Likewise, the intrusion of ministers was one of the grounds upon which a secession was stated from the Prelatic church of Scotland by the body of Presbyterian

the same author shews at length, *Hind-let-loose*, p. 236, 37, &c. to which I refer the reader. When the author of the Essay, in the words cited above, seems to allow that particular congregations have something to say for refusing to submit to the ministry of such as are intruded upon them, I boldly judge ministers may have as much to say, who refuse communion with such judicatories as obtrude ministers upon Christian congregations; there is as much reason on the one side as the other: Yea, there may be more reason for refusing communion with the judicatories, if there is any weight in what our author very well knows. Intruders have sometimes pled in their own defence, that they must submit to the authority, and obey the sentences of judicatories; and, if the judicatories did not intrude ministers upon congregations, intrusions could not take place by any other means whatsoever.

His next instance of a ground of separation is, When ministers are scandalous in life and conversation. And here I have no difference with him: For he not only tells us what some affirm, and what some think; but declares plainly, that he is much of their opinion, who think, "such as are evidently scandalous may be withdrawn from, albeit, thro' the iniquity of the times, they should not be censured by a church-judicatory when complained of."

The last instance he gives, of what is reckoned ground of separation is, "The imposing the least sinful term of communion upon us." Here again he delivers himself plainly; for he owns, that this is ground of separation from a church. He adds, "Some have been of opinion, that this is the only ground that can justify separation from a church of Christ." And here, at the foot of the page, he cites *Claud's Defence of the Reformation*, but he cites no place of that book: And, if he pleases to consult it, he will find other grounds of separation advanced; as for instance, Claud affirms, "That when corruption spreads over all the body (*viz.* of the ministry) in such a manner, and to that degree, that the safety of the faithful cannot longer subsist under the conduct of these persons, and that there is no hope among them of any amendment, then the only remedy that remains is to separate from them; and it would be so far from either violating the order of God, or opposing the ministry that he had set up, that it would be on the contrary to deliver it as much as in us lay, out of the hands of those who

" have

" have invaded it, and to draw it out of that oppression
 " which they have reduced it: This separation therefore
 " ly regards those persons who were unlawfully called to
 " ministry, and who abused it against God and his church.
 And here, by the by, our author may observe a famous
 formed divine acknowledgeing the justice of separation from
 those who are unlawfully called to the ministry: And I let
 it to himself to judge, if intruders are lawfully called to
 ministry; as also, whether or not the ministerial power is
 abused against God and his church, when men are intruded
 upon dissenting and reclaiming congregations, who are willing
 to have a gospel minister settled amongst them. He cites
 so, at the foot of his page, bishop Burnet's history of
 own time: But he might have been ashamed to have men-
 tioned one who is known to be abundantly lax in his principles
 about church communion; and especially, when, in the place
 to which our author directs us, the bishop is reasoning against
 separation from the church of England. Our author pro-
 ceeds, p. 37. to give some particular instances of sinful terms
 of communion: He names seven, wherein I agree with him
 only I crave leave to express his seventh in the following man-
 ner, namely, *If our communion or conjunction with any particular
 church binds us up or restrains us from the discharge of
 any duty which our station, office and character, by the com-
 mand of God, does oblige us unto, whether the restraint thus
 laid upon us be explicate or more implicate.* This I have illu-
 strate already; and I hope our author cannot reasonably
 refuse that it makes conjunction with any particular church
 equally sinful with these instances that are given by himself
 in sinful terms of communion. I proceed now to

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* *Hist. Def. Part 3. p. 17, 18. Engl. Transl.*

S E C T. III.

re in the State of the Question concerning Secession from the present Judicatories is declared.

THE author of the Essay diverts himself a little with his criticisms upon the term *secession*, p 193. when he tells us, The ordinary and common sense thereof is "a local removing, upon some urgent lawful occasion, spiritual or temporal, to another or better-constitute church." Tho' worthy divine whom he cites tells us, That the word *secession* may be taken in this sense; yet he cannot but know, that our divines have made use of this term to express a departure from communion with a particular visible church, either in whole or in part, upon just and weighty grounds, even when there is no local removing, or changing, of one's habitation: Hence Turretine, in his dissertation concerning the necessity of separation from the church of Rome, makes use of the term *secession*, tho' he knew very well that Protestants in France and Germany, and other Popish countries, never removed from their habitations, except when force and violence drove them from them. Our author adds, They (the seceding ministers) have not separated locally, seeing they still inhabit the same manse, as well as enjoy the same benefices." It seems the above observe upon the term *secession* is made, that he may vent somewhat of a grudge that we have a peaceable residence in our several congregations to which we bear a pastoral relation, and that we enjoy the benefices to which we have a just claim by virtue of our office and relation to them. Next, he tells us, The word *secession* is sometimes taken for a revolt and mutiny. He does not alledge any authority for this sense and meaning of the word, and I do not know if he can; but he is pleased to add, Many think they have made a secession in that respect." Here he discovers a disposition to hold and treat us as revolvers and mutineers; but I shall not trouble the reader further with idle criticisms in handling such an important subject. Once I cannot but here observe, that it may be reasonably presumed that our author has learned the above criticism from some doctor of the church of Rome, or at least from some author

author whose name for shame he behoved to conceal; and what makes this conjecture more probable is, that Mr. Claud reports, that the doctors of the church of Rome treated our worthy reformers after the same manner: His words are "They accuse them (*viz.* our reformers) to have been rebels and schismatics, who lifted themselves up against the authority of their mother the church, and broke the sacred bond of the Christian communion *." Which is the same upon the matter with what our author has advanced as above. But, whatever be in this, sure it was some urgent necessity that brought him upon the field, without a visible second, not two to support him, seeing he seldom takes the field without two or three such attendants, tho' frequently pressed into his service. But I proceed to lay down some necessary observes and distinctions, for laying open the true state of the question.

1st, There is a difference betwixt different sentiments amongst the members of a church, upon some particular points that have never been a part or branch of testimony in the church, or that were never adopted in any of her public acts and constitutions; and such principles and practices maintained and justified, which are in themselves a departure or backsliding from some part or branch of what has been received and adopted as a point of confession and testimony in a church. The seceding brethren are far from stating their secession upon every difference of sentiments. He tells us upon his first proposition, "That some would, and do, excommunicate all that are not exactly of their mind." Who the *some* are, our author best knows. The instance that he gives of the giant Procrustes, p. 6. has more levity in it than becomes the gravity of the subject. But as the above is not of the principles of the seceding ministers (for they know very well that the best of men may have different sentiments) so the question before us is concerning such principles or practices as may be justly reckoned a departure from what has been a matter of confession and testimony in this particular national church.

2^{dly}, There is a vast difference betwixt evils and errors that a church may fall into, and these evils justified, and continued in, after the ordinary means have been used to reclaim a church or the judicatories thereof. The seceding ministers have not stated their secession upon any particular evils lately

* *Glaud's Hist. Def. Part. 1. p. 2.*

ring up in this national church, and which the judicatories
 shew a willingness to reform, or bear testimony against,
 their judicative capacity; but upon such evils as have been
 complained of, and remonstrate against; yea, and after
 the ordinary means have been used to bring the judicato-
 ries to the faithful discharge of their duty, till at length some
 ministers were thrust out from the present judicatories, mere-
 ly on account of their contending in a way of communion a-
 gainst the fore said evils, as is more fully shown in the introduc-
 tion.

3dly, It is one thing to depart from the communion of a
 church, and another thing to depart from communion with a
 party in that church, tho' the greatest number, who are car-
 rying on a course of defection and backsliding. The seced-
 ing brethren have always refused, and they do upon good
 grounds refuse, that they have made any secession from the
 church of Scotland. If the church of Scotland is considered
 by her principles are held forth from the word of God, in her
 confession of Faith, Larger and Shorter Catechisms, Form of
 church-government, Directory for Worship, and other lau-
 dable acts and constitutions of this national church; the se-
 ceding ministers have openly declared and acknowledged their
 adherence to all these, in their judicial act and testimony:
 if her principles are considered, as they are solemnly a-
 vowed and sworn to the national covenant of Scotland, and
 the Solemn League and Covenant of the three nations, they
 have also in like manner, in their fore said act and testimony,
 acknowledged the inviolable obligation of these solemn oaths
 and covenants: But, if the church of Scotland is considered
 as represented in her present judicatories, they own that they
 have declared a secession from them, and that they cannot
 now act in conjunction with them, as members of the same
 ecclesiastical body; and that because they are carrying on a
 course of defection and backsliding from our covenanted uni-
 formity in doctrine, worship, government and discipline,
 notwithstanding of manifold representations and remonstrances
 made before them unto the contrary. Therefore the questi-
 on under our consideration is not concerning secession from
 the church of Scotland, but concerning secession from the
 present judicatories of this national church.

4thly, There is a vast difference betwixt a church pursu-
 ing after reformation, and a church declining and backsliding
 from

from her reformation purity. In the former case, when a church is using her endeavours to reform what is wrong, and to redress what is gravaminous, tho' through mistake she may take some wrong steps in her administration, yet it would be very unreasonable to depart from her communion; but in the latter case, when the prevailing course and management of the judicatories of a church is towards backsliding from reformation purity once attained unto, every wrong step that is taken has a native tendency towards strengthening and accelerating the general course of apostasy and backsliding. Tho' the Essay looks upon this distinction as of no weight, yet I find Mr. Shiells, in his treatise on church communion, lays very much stress upon it: Therefore, p. 23. 24. of that book, he lays down the very same distinction; and when he comes to state the question, p. 27. he states it in the following manner, according to his views of the church of Scotland at that time: "The question (says he) is not, Whether we can hold union or communion with those ministers, tho' sound in principles, who yet are carrying on courses of compliances and defections, involving all in sin that have communion with them, in a broken and declining state of the church? but the question is, Whether we can have communion and union with these that did indeed comply with the wicked establishments of the time, and were involved in the defections of the church, but now are carrying on reformation in doctrine, Worship, Discipline and Government, according to the institutions of Christ, and the constitutions of this church in former times?" The same excellent person is yet more plain, when he tells us, p. 15. Only we plead for union with Presbyterian ministers promoting reformation in doctrine, Worship, Discipline and Government, and opposing Popery, Prelacy, Erastianism, Sectarianism, and whatsoever is contrary to sound doctrine and the power of godliness, according to the word of God, our Confession of Faith, and covenants." I humbly judge, that seceding ministers may be satisfied to have their cause examined and tried according to the above way and manner which Mr. Shiells states the question. Our author thinks fit to tell us, p. 196. "That he knows the above treatise was recommended by our dear brother the reverend Mr. Ebenezer Erskine to some of his parishoners when at Portmoak; and (says he) I wish all our Separatists and others

also may read it seriously. hearkning to his solid reasons against separation." Whether our author speaks of the reverend Mr. Erskine in the above manner, in a way of jest, or out of true regard unto him, I shall leave it to the reader to judge; only I must observe, that he had good reason to recommend Mr. Shiells on church communion, and I wish our author and others would seriously consider his solid reasons and conclusions against union and conjunction with such as are carrying on a course of defection from our reformed and covenanted principles.

5thly, It is one thing to state a secession from a church on account of personal blemishes and defects in the walk and conversation of her members, and another thing to state secession from a church on account of a course of defection from steps of reformation once attained unto, carried on by her judicatories in their judicative capacity, notwithstanding of remonstrances against such backslidings and declinings: The seceding ministers have never stated their secession upon the former, but they do it upon the latter. The Essay, p. 16. gives us the following proposition out of Mr. Rutherford's Due Right, p. 255. "There is no just cause to leave a less clean church, if it be a true church, and go to a purer and cleaner." And he apprehends that this makes so much for him, that he puts it in the front of the paper which he calls his short Vindication; but any who have read that book of Mr. Rutherford's, will easily see, that he reasons against such who plead for the necessity of positive evidences and signs of regeneration in order to church communion, and who state secession from a church on account of personal defects and blemishes in the walk and conversation of church-members: But as our secession is not stated upon any such principles, so this proposition of Mr. Rutherford's is not at all to the purpose. As for instance, If any should separate from the parochial church of Kinglassie, and join themselves unto another which they apprehended to be more pure and clean, merely because the most part of the members of the said church may want positive evidences and signs of regeneration, I doubt not but all the seceding brethren would condemn them, and would readily declare themselves of the same mind with Mr. Rutherford in his Due Right. And as it is well expressed by him, in his last printed letter directed to some professors in Aberdeen, who were carried away into such extremes;

" If you exclude all non converts from the visible city of
 " God, in which daily, multitudes in Scotland, in all the
 " four quarters of the land, above whatever our fathers saw
 " throng into Christ; shall they not be left to the lions and
 " wild beasts of the forest, even to jesuites, seminary priests,
 " and other seducers?—Nor can it be a way approved of the
 " Lord in scripture, to excommunicate from the visible
 " church (which is the office-house of the free grace of Christ,
 " and his draw-net) all the multitudes of non-converts, bap-
 " tised, and visibly within the covenant of grace, which are
 " in Great Britain and all the reformed churches, and so to
 " shut the gates of the Lord's gracious calling upon all these,
 " because they are not in your judgment chosen to salvation,
 " when once you are within yourselves." I wish such as are
 in danger of these extremes would seriously consider these
 and the like strong scripture reasonings contain'd in the fore-
 said letter: But tho' the seceding brethren do not state church-
 communion or secession upon the above-mentioned principles;
 yet they may very well affirm, with the whole stream of re-
 formed divines, that *A visible profession and confession of the*
truth is necessary to the constitution of such a particular visi-
ble church, unto which we may safely join in communion: Or
 according to Mr. Gillespie, as he is cited, *Essay*, p. 3. " To
 " maintain and profess the true doctrine, and the true faith,
 " is by all protestant orthodox writers made one, yea, the
 " principal mark of a true visible church." They may like-
 wise safely affirm with Mr. Rutherford in the page above cit-
 ed, " When the greatest part of a church maketh defection
 " from the truth, the lesser part remaining sound, the great-
 " est part is the church of separatists: Tho' the manifest and
 " greatest part in the actual exercise of discipline be the
 " church; yet, in the case of right discipline, the best, tho'
 " fewest, is the church; for truth is like life, that retireth
 " from the manifest members unto the heart, that there re-
 " maineth in its fountain, in case of danger." Here Mr. Ru-
 therfoord writes very plainly: In the former proposition, he
 tells us what is not ground of separation from a true church;
 in this, he tells us what is ground of separation from a
 church, even when the greatest part make defection
 from the truth. The *Essay* but clouds and darkens the
 matter, when he tells us, that surely Mr. Rutherford
 means " of declared defection from the truth in fun-
 " damentals."

damentals." I have said enough upon the point of fundamentals already; I shall only subjoin the following proposition concerning fundamentals, advanced by Mr. Rutherford in the same section, p. 229. "Tho' the knowledge of fundamentals be necessary unto salvation, yet it cannot easily be defined what measure of knowledge of fundamentals, doth constitute a true visible church, and a sound believer."

6thly, It is one thing to depart from communion with a particular church on account of her corruptions, and another thing to unchurch that same particular church: I find these two frequently confounded, or reckoned one and the same thing in the Essay, as p. 4. "Tho' some among us should be leavened with unsound doctrine, and albeit there should be faults both as to the administration of sacraments and exercise of discipline, it is far from being enough to unchurch, or occasion separation from the church of Scotland, seeing she doth not own nor approve of these." A secession may be warrantably declared from a church on account of her corruptions and backslidings, when yet she is not unchurched: it is hard to determine what length a church may go in apostacy and backsliding, before she is altogether unchurched: the author, if he pleases, may read to this purpose one of his own books, Mr. Rutherford's *Peaceable Plea*, chap. X. Tho' the dissenters in England and Ireland have stated a secession from the church of England, on account of her corruptions in worship, government and discipline; they do not therefore unchurch her: They do not refuse her the character and denomination of a Protestant church; nay, they do not dispute that many have lived and died in communion with the church of England, thro' ignorance of her corruptions and the sinfulness thereof, who have had communion with Christ. And this leads me to take notice of one of our author's arguments against secession from the church of Scotland in her present constitution, on account of its affinity with what is observed on this head; "Moreover (says he, p. 63.) to separate from the church of Scotland at this day, 'tis interpretatively a condemning of Christ the Head of the church, as if he was to be blamed, seeing he yet keeps communion with her." All the proof he brings, for the support of his argument, is some words alledged from Mr. Durham; but he has not thought fit to tell us in which of Mr. Durham's works the words are to be found; I cannot therefore pass a-

ny judgment about them. I have given some instances ready, and I shall give more ere I have done, that our author's citations do not always support his arguments, especially if they are taken in connection with other parts of the subject out of which they are excerpted: But, with respect unto his above argument against secession, it leans evidently upon the following proposition, *When we separate from a church, we interpretatively condemn Christ, as if he was to be blamed for keeping communion with any of her members.* But I do not think that our author will get any of our Presbyterian or reformed divines that will justify his assertion; they are all very cautious in determining what length a church may go in defection or corruption, before communion is wholly cut off betwixt the Head and all the members thereof: That corruption and superstition can never have the approbation and countenance of heaven, will it therefore follow, that when we depart from communion with a particular visible church on account of her corruptions, our secession is "interpretatively a condemning of Christ the Head of the church, as if he were to be blamed," if he in his adorable sovereignty communicate himself and his grace even to those who remain in communion with a corrupt and degenerate church? The sovereignty of grace may be glorified amongst these whom it is not safe nor warrantable for us to hold communion with as members of the same ecclesiastic body. The hidden and secret communications of the grace of the Redeemer, are neither the standard nor rule of our duty; therefore, tho' we have declared a secession from the present judicatories, it does not follow that we have unchurched them. Neither will it follow that we alledge, that none of the members of this national church, who are in conjunction with the present judicatories, have communion with the Lord Jesus; and far less will it follow, that our secession is to be interpreted in the manner above-expressed by our author, which I shall not repeat.

7thly, Some are pleased to distinguish betwixt a negative and positive secession from a church, particularly the author of the Essay, p. 9. with a manifest design to fix a positive secession (according to his sense and meaning of it) from the church of Scotland upon the seceding ministers; and therefore it will be necessary that I explain what is commonly meant by the above terms, as also that I consider how far

they

they are applicable to the secession as it is stated at present by
 the associate Presbytery. Negative secession is, when a per-
 son or persons withdraw from communion with a particular
 church on account of some corruptions that have taken place,
 but have not freedom as yet to meet together in distinct as-
 semblies for worship and government, in expectation that the
 corruptions complained of may be shortly amended by that
 particular church from whom they have, in so far, seceded.
 Again, positive secession is, when such as depart from com-
 munion with a particular church upon just and warrantable
 grounds, do likewise meet together in distinct assemblies for
 worship and government, after they have tried all the ordina-
 ry means for removing of the corruptions, or for remedy of
 the evils complained of; and yet in the mean time the means
 that they have used are so far despised, that the corruptions
 and evils complained of are persisted in and justified, and
 whereby all reasonable expectation of reforming the said cor-
 ruptions and evils is lost. The seceding ministers will rea-
 dily grant that they have upon the foresaid grounds made a
 secession both negative and positive from this national church
 as she is now represented in her present judicatories; but
 when they have always refused that they have made a secession
 either of the above senses from the national church of Scot-
 land, when she is considered in her reformed principles, with
 respect to doctrine, worship, government and discipline, as
 they have been laid down from the word of God in her ap-
 proved standards, unto which all ranks of persons in the land
 have bound and engaged themselves by solemn covenant con-
 stantly and stedfastly to adhere. And here I would have the
 reader carefully to observe the difference between the nation-
 al church of Scotland in her excellent constitution agreeable
 to the word of God, and as she is at present represented
 in her judicatories, who are carrying on a course of defection,
 letting slip, or departing from, such reformation-princi-
 ples as we in this organic church have once professed, ac-
 knowledged, and sworn to maintain. I hope I may affirm in
 the name of the members of the associate Presbytery, that they
 desire thro' grace never to secede from the constitution and
 principles of the national church of Scotland, but to contri-
 bute their endeavours for the support and defence of the same:
 and therefore they are not constituting a distinct church from

the national church of Scotland, but only, as a part of that national church, are endeavouring, in the situation wherein adorable providence has placed them, to cleave to reformation-purity once attained unto in this church, and to testify against a course of defection from the same, carried on by the majority at this day. For I have already observed, that every particular visible church is related to the catholic body, as a part unto the whole: Hence it follows, that, in a national church, every particular parochial or Presbyterial church stands in the same relation to the national; consequently, when the greatest part of the representatives of a national church are involved in a course of defection from the principles of that church, that part of the national church, tho' the lesser, who desire to cleave to their constitution and principles, and who for this end associate together, either in a Presbyterial or synodical capacity, to make an open and public profession of their said principles, are not a distinct church from the national, but a part of the same only, however distinct they may be from the majority of the present representatives of that national church, who are carrying on a course of defection in opposition to the received principles of that church whom they represent. I must likewise observe, that, when secession is stated from any particular church upon just and warrantable grounds, it is also the duty of the seceders to meet together in distinct assemblies for worship; in regard the public worship of God is what even the light of nature warrants, and what the whole word of God does expressly oblige us unto, since the time that men began first to call upon the name of the Lord: And therefore, if such as declare secession from a church upon just grounds, are warranted and obliged to assemble together for the public worship of God, then such as are office bearers among them have the very same warrant to associate together for the exercise of government and discipline.

From what is above observed, the reader may see, that, in the case stands betwixt the associate presbytery and the present judicatories, the question is not concerning secession from the church of Scotland, but concerning the warrantableness and justice of secession from her present judicatories, or from this national church as she is represented in the said judicatories: The seceding ministers refuse secession from the church of Scotland, but affirm that it is their duty to depart from

the present judicatories. Again, the question is not concerning the rearing up of a distinct church from the national church of Scotland, but, whether or not these who are grieved with the conduct and management of the present judicatories, have divine right and warrant to associate together for the exercise of the keys of discipline and government in a distinct capacity from the said judicatories? Likewise, the question is not concerning secession from a church holding and maintaining her reformation-purity, but concerning secession from such judicatories as are letting slip that purity once attained unto, or who are carrying on a course of defection from our reformation principles and purity. Again, the question is not concerning secession from a reforming church, or from judicatories that are willing to be reformed; but concerning secession from such judicatories who refuse to be reclaimed, and who, instead of returning unto the Lord, are in several instances backsliding more and more, particularly in the late active concurrence of the most part of the ministry with an evident encroachment upon the crown and kingdom of the Redeemer, by their reading in one shape or other the late act of parliament against captain John Porteous, and in the universal silent submission and acquiescence of the judicatories unto the said Erastian encroachment and usurpation. Also, the question is not, If this or the other particular step of defection from our reformation purity, considered abstractly and in itself, gives just ground of secession from the present judicatories? but the question is, Whether or not a complex course of defection, and this persisted in after the ordinary means have been used to reclaim them, gives just ground for such who desire to be found faithful unto the Lord, to depart from ecclesiastical union and conjunction with the said judicatories, and to associate together in a distinct judicative capacity from them, in order to bear testimony unto our reformation principles, and against such a complex course of defection from them, whereby the bond of our ecclesiastical unity in the present judicatories is dissolved and broke? The seceding ministers have never stated their secession upon any particular step of defection considered abstractly in itself, but upon a series and tract of backsliding, or upon a complex course of defection from our reformation-purity; as is evident from their first testimony, p. 46. The seceding ministers have just ground to alledge, that the present judicatories

ries refuse to display the banner of a judicial testimony for truth; in regard they have neither expressly nor particularly condemned the many hainous errors that have been brought to their bar, whereby a dangerous *syncretism* is introduced into this church. They may likewise justly alledge, that there is a series and tract of tyranny in the administration, whereby the flock of Christ are wounded, scattered and broken; as also, that the crown rights of the Redeemer have been profaned and cast down to the ground of late, as well as in former times; and that no judicial testimony is lifted up for his special prerogatives as King of Zion, nor for the honour of his kingdom; and that, in these and the like particular instances, the bond of our union and conjunction in this particular organized church is dissolved and broken. And further, it may be alledged, That a course of defection is persisted in, notwithstanding of representations, remonstrances, and other ordinary means that have been used by ministers and other church members to bring the judicatories to the faithful discharge of their duty; and therefore, that it is the duty of all such office bearers in the church of Scotland, who desire to keep the word of the Lord's patience, and to be found faithful unto him in this day of degeneracy and backsliding, to depart from ecclesiastical communion with the present judicatories, and, tho' they may be few in number, to associate together for the exercise of the keys of government and discipline for the ends for which they are committed unto them; or, that it is their duty to do what they have a right and warrant to do, and what all ecclesiastical judicatories are commanded to do, as they would approve themselves unto the Head of the church, and as they would answer the end and design of their appointment and institution in the New Testament church, which is for the support and defence of the truth, and for the edification of the body of Christ.

I shall only further observe, That when the complex conduct and management of the present judicatories is considered, together with their submission to such Erastian encroachments and usurpations which nearly affect their constitution; the question likewise is, Whether or not the present judicatories of this national church can be held and reputed as lawful and right-constitute courts of Christ? I shall also consider the question

question in this shape, in stating the argument for secession from the said judicatories. I shall proceed then to

C H A P. II.

Wherein the Argument for Secession from the present Judicatories is stated, and also vindicated from the Exceptions laid against the same by the Author of the Essay.

AS the question is stated in the close of the preceeding chapter, that which I am now to instruct and prove is, that, when the conduct of the present judicatories of this national church is considered, all such who desire to stand upon our reformation bottom and ground, ought to depart from communion with them in their judicative capacity; as also, that such ministers and elders, who desire to be found faithful unto the Lord, have right and warrant on their side, from the word of God, and from the acts and constitutions of this national church agreeable thereto, tho' few in number, to associate together, and to exercise the keys of government and discipline, that they may in a judicative capacity bear testimony to the truths of God against the many injuries that are done to the same, as also that they may in the said capacity contribute their endeavours for the help and relief of the Lord's oppressed heritage thro' the land. And, for proof of this, I shall take a view of the church of Scotland as she is represented in her present judicatories, both with respect to her conduct in doctrinal errors, and also with respect to her behaviour in the exercise of government and discipline; and from her management in these shall shew, that there is no just ground for secession from her; and that such ministers and elders, who endeavour to cleave to our reformation-principles, have right, as is said, to associate together in a distinct capacity from the said judicatories: And I shall conclude this chapter with some instances of several steps of deduction that have taken place since the secession was first stated anno 1733, whereby it will appear, that the present judicatories,

catories, instead of reforming and returning unto the Lord, have rather given ground to the seceding ministers to continue in their secession from them.

S E C T. I.

Wherein it is proven, that this National Church, as she is represented in her present Judicatories, has not the Scriptural Character of the Church of the living God, 1 Tim. iii. 15.

I Have observed already, that it is a special character of the church of the living God, that she is a society professing and confessing the truths of God; hence she is designed, *the pillar and ground of truth*, 1 Tim. iii. 15. The Popish doctors do grossly abuse this scripture, when they conclude from it the infallibility of their church; but our reformed divines do very well observe, that the Holy Ghost, in the above words, plainly declares unto us one of the principal ends and designs of the erection and constitution of a visible church in this world, with the duty that is incumbent upon every particular church, as she would evidence and manifest herself to be the church of the living God. The church is the ground of truth, that is, she ought to maintain, uphold and support the truth, against all such errors as may spring up in the church, whereby the truth may be any wise prejudiced: She is the pillar of truth, that is, she ought to publish, notify and declare the truth, in such particular and distinct terms as every one may understand the mind and will of the Lord and head of the church; when error is vented, she ought to give a certain and distinct sound, that it may be known what is truth, and what is error. The office-bearers of the church are in a special manner enjoined this duty, therefore this is what is incumbent upon the church-representative in a particular manner: The apostle Paul gives a particular charge and warning to this purpose unto the elders of Ephesus, Acts xx. 28, 29. As also, the maintainance and preservation of truth, is a trust committed unto the office-bearers, which they are commanded to hold fast, 2 Tim. i. 13, 14. In every particular visible church, whether national or provincial, their communion together is built upon their common or joint profession and confession of the same faith: If, in a particular

particular visible church, every one have a doctrine, and every one have a psalm, there is nothing but disorder and confusion in the house of God; and if there is not a joint profession of the truth, in opposition unto such dangerous errors as may arise, a particular church may soon become a habitation of dragons, instead of being the house of God; or a synagogue of Satan, instead of being the church of the living God. It is one of the special uses and ends of all public Confessions of Faith, to hold forth from the word of God the truth, in opposition unto such errors and heresies whereby divine truth may be subverted. But, if we take a view of the conduct of the present judicatories with respect to the dangerous errors that have arisen amongst us, I must observe with regret, that this national church, as she is represented in them, has not the above character of the church of the living God; tho' we have an excellent Confession of Faith, yet, thro' the conduct and management of the judicatories, it cannot be looked upon any more as a fixed standard and test of soundness in the faith amongst them, as may be evident from the following particulars.

A scheme of principles, evasive of that scheme of divine truth laid down from the word of God in our Confession of Faith, has been brought to the bar of our assemblies: As for instance, Doctrines, whereby the federal headship of the first Adam was impugned and denied, and consequently the true and proper imputation of his first sin to his posterity is overthrown; doctrines, whereby the heinous desert of original sin imputed and inherent is diminished; as also doctrines, whereby universal grace is established, in so far as it has been asserted at the bar of our assemblies, that there is an implicit offer of grace, and an obscure revelation of the remedy provided for sin, made to those that live without the church, by the works of creation and providence including tradition; as likewise, in so far as a connection is established, either from the gracious nature, or from the promise of God, betwixt the serious endeavours of the heathen, and a fuller and clearer revelation of the remedy unto them; and betwixt the serious endeavours of those that are within the church, and special and saving grace: Doctrines also, whereby the absolute dominion of God over the free actions of the rational creature, and the creature's absolute dependence upon him in working, as well as in being, are subverted, and consequently

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ly a special part and branch of divine providence impugned: Doctrines likewise, whereby our faith of the truth of divine revelation is, according to Mr. Locke's scheme, ultimately resolved into a series and train of moral arguments and reasonings. As these and other pernicious doctrines have been vented and maintained amongst us, so the author of the Essay will be hard put to it to prove that they are not everlive of the foundation; and however light some may make of them, yet, if they are seriously considered, it will plainly appear, that the whole system of divine truth, held forth from the word of God in our Confession of Faith, is subverted by them: And it may be too justly said, that the church has been leavened by the said doctrines, seeing these dangerous errors have been brought to the bar of our assemblies once and again, and the standard of a testimony has never been lifted up against them. When the above doctrines were brought first under the cognizance of our general assemblies, they were dismissed *anno* 1717 in some general terms, and none of them were particularly and expressly condemned. And when the committee of assembly, *anno* 1727, found it clearly proven that Mr. Simson persisted in teaching the same dangerous scheme, yet the assemblies of this church have never given any manner of testimony against the same; neither does the author of the Essay alledge, that any of them have been condemned, as contrary to the word of God and our Confession of Faith. And, if this is duly considered, every unprejudiced person may see, that there is no truth in what is asserted concerning this church, Essay, p. 2. "As her standards for doctrine are pure, so she allows of no errors in doctrine." Tho' her standards for doctrine were never so pure or perfect, yet when error is brought unto her bar, and not condemned, she is justly charged with tolerating and allowing error. It is evident, that tho' the standards of a church may be pure, yet, if error is brought to the bar of her judicatories, and maintained as agreeable unto her standards, and the church says nothing to the contrary, that every one who adopt such dangerous principles may reasonably judge in themselves, that the church does not reckon the errors they espouse to be contrary to her public standards. And this was the case with Mr. Simson; he maintained, that the several propositions which were owned and acknowledged by him, tho' of the above dangerous nature and tendency, were agreeable to the word

God, and nowise contrary to our Confession of Faith. Hence it is plain, that, with respect to the errors asserted and maintained by Mr. Simson in his first process, our Confession of Faith can no more be reckoned a fixed standard, and test of orthodoxy or soundness in the faith, in opposition to the said errors, either in the judicatories of the church, or amongst such as are in conjunction with them; in regard the present judicatories have refused a Confession of their Faith, in opposition to the above pernicious errors maintained at their bar agreeable to the word of God, and nowise contrary to our said Confession of Faith; and consequently they must be held as a leavened lump, until the above-mentioned and other errors are particularly and expressly condemned.

With respect to the second libel against Mr. Simson, and the errors vented by Mr. Campbell, if they are duly considered, it is to be regretted that it may justly be affirmed, that errors everfive of the foundation have been vented amongst us, and that the judicatories have given no particular testimony against them, even tho' the venters of the said errors have in the manner pled that their doctrines were nowise contrary to the word of God, or our Confession of Faith. As for instance, the true Deity of the Son of God is a foundation-truth; as so, it is a foundation-truth, That the three-persons of the adorable Trinity are one substance in number: But it was clearly proven, both by the depositions of witnesses, and by Mr. Simson's own papers in process, that he had expressed himself in terms subversive of these fundamentals truths. Yet the general assemblies of this church have never inflicted any censure upon the said Mr. Simson, bearing any proportion to the grievous scandal and offence he had given; yea, they have ever particularly condemned the erroneous propositions vented by Mr. Simson, whereby the scripture-doctrine of the holy Trinity is subverted; neither have they asserted the truth in opposition unto the terms in which it has been opposed and denied: And consequently the present judicatories have never this day lifted up a faithful judicial testimony for the above foundation truths, and against the errors that have been vented to the prejudice of the same.

Likewise, a scheme of dangerous principles has been published and defended by Mr. Campbell professor of church-history at St. Andrews; and amongst others, in his preface to his discourse proving that the apostles were not enthusiasts, he

he asserts, p. 5. 6. " That the laws of nature are in them-
 selves a certain and sufficient rule to direct rational minds
 to happiness; and that the observing of these laws is the
 great mean and instrument of our real and lasting felicity.
 And also in his enquiry, p. 273. he asserts and maintains
 " That if we settle it as our main purpose, to recommend
 ourselves to the love and esteem and commendation of God,
 and of all mankind, thro' every stage of our external exis-
 tence (*viz.* by our moral virtue, or by our duties of obedi-
 ence unto the moral law) which, says he, if we follow na-
 ture, we cannot but do: every degree of esteem we ac-
 quire here cannot but be exceeding grateful: The prospect
 of being universally applauded for ever hereafter, must ne-
 cessarily be very transporting; and the means that lift us
 up to this commendation, *viz.* Moral virtue, cannot but
 prove extremely agreeable." From whence it is plain, that
 Mr. Campbell asserts, That the practice of moral virtue is a
 instituted mean for recommending us unto the love, esteem
 and commendation of God; as also, That, in the practice of
 moral virtue, we are to settle it as our main purpose to re-
 commend ourselves to the love and commendation of God
 thereby. The author of the *Essay* may try if he can recon-
 cile all the above several propositions, considered together
 with what he himself acknowledges to be a foundation-truth
 p. 26. " That our justification is solely by the surety's im-
 puted everlasting righteousness." Again, Mr. Campbell
 affirms, " That the sole and universal motive to virtuous ac-
 tions is self-love, interest, or pleasure, Enquiry, p. 46.
 " and that men may refuse to worship God, unless he pre-
 sents himself favourably inclined to their interest, and the
 prospect of their happiness; and that in matter of devotion
 they are absolutely governed by self-interest." To which
 I may add another of Mr. Simson's principles, " That, were
 it not for the prospect of happiness, we could not, in this
 world, therefore would not, serve God." The committee of the
 assembly, anno 1727, do give it as their judgment, That the
 principle of Mr. Simson's (which is the same upon the matter
 with Mr. Campbell's principle concerning self-love and self-
 interest) is ever-sive of the foundation." For, say they, it is
 contrary to the " instinct of that new nature the Lord endow-
 ed all his people with in regeneration;—and that it is
 thro' a prevailing respect to God's honour and glory, and

not a mere or chief respect to our own happiness, that the difference betwixt nature and grace is to be cleared to the doubtful Christian." And they add, That the above principle "is a sacrificing of all to the idol of ourselves, and a going only the length of the foolish virgins, who may desire the oil of grace for the sake of their own happiness, and that they may enter into heaven." *State Proc.* p. 77. If the general assembly had approved of the above judgment of their committee, they had given some testimony to the truth; but they took no manner of notice of it: And of the above doctrines, everlive of the foundation, have been brought to the bar of the judicatories; yet none of them have been particularly or expressly condemned: And as for the teachers of them, Mr. Simson was but slightly censured, and Mr. Campbell was dismissed from the bar without any censure at all; yea, his principle concerning self-love and interest has been adopted by the assembly 1736 in their act dismissing the process, as the associate presbytery have found, and give their grounds and reasons for it in their act and testimony, p. 65. and since the author of the Essay has not attempted to disprove any of said reasons, I need not insist upon the vindication of them. Upon the whole, since gross and heinous errors, yea, errors subversive of the foundation, have been brought to the bar of judicatories, and since they have not been particularly nor expressly condemned, nor the truth asserted in direct opposition unto them; with what colour or shadow of reason can it be affirmed, that the present judicatories allow of no errors in doctrine? *Essay*, p. 2. Our author likewise in a very magisterial manner asserts, "That it is unaccountable to charge the church of Scotland as favourers of these errors, seeing never so much as one person in any of the judicatories of this church offered to vindicate or plead for any of these," p. 18. But tho' never one person did plead for them under the character of errors, yet, if it not been pled before the judicatories, that they should be dismissed without censure? and, when an act assertory of the truth has been demanded, does not our author very well know that it has been argued in open court, that we were not to add new articles to our Confession of Faith? and what could be meant by such pleadings, but that our Confession does not determine particularly and expressly, in opposition unto many of the gross and heinous errors that have

have been vented? Yea, had not such pleadings a direct tendency to support Masters Simson and Campbell in their ordinary plea, that their pernicious errors were not contrary to our Confession of Faith? and, is it not plain, that the judicatories have never particularly or expressly condemned any of them as such? If these things are duly considered, our authors may easily see, that the charge that is laid against the judicatories, as favourers of errors that have been vented amongst us, may be very well accounted for.

Tho' Mr. Campbell's affair was sometime after the stating of the secession, and though there was sufficient ground and reason for declaring a secession on account of the conduct of judicatories in the affair of Mr. Simson, especially when the ordinary means did not prevail for obtaining a judicial testimony for the honour and support of injured truth; yet, to prevent repetition, I judged it proper in this place to consider what relates unto doctrine; and, for the same reason, I shall briefly consider the conduct of the judicatories with respect to doctor Wishart's affair. The presbytery of Edinburgh having excerpted out of two sermons, preached and published by him, some propositions which they alledged did either strike against the use and design of Confessions of Faith as standards of orthodoxy in a particular church, or were contrary to some important articles of our own Confession of Faith; when the cause came before the last general assembly 1738, the managers for the presbytery of Edinburgh insisted before that assembly, that the particular propositions excerpted out of the doctor's sermons should be judged, and that the assembly should consider whether they were errors contrary to our confession or not. Though this demand was just and reasonable, yet the assembly thought fit to conduct themselves after another manner; they heard the doctor declare his adherence to our Confession of Faith, and upon his declared adherence to the several articles of our confession unto which the propositions taken out of his sermons were alledged to be contrary, he is acquitted from the charge of error. At this rate, though one should teach and publish error, if he shall declare his adherence to our Confession of Faith, or if he has the skill and dexterity to impose some sense upon the received articles of our Confession, whereby he pretends to reconcile his own tenets and sentiments with them, he is immediately acquitted from

the charge of error. And who can doubt, that, where a Confession is authorized by the laws of the land, such as are not resolved to deprive themselves of the legal benefice will own the said Confession, and profess their adherence to the same, even when their scheme of principles is quite opposite to the genuine sense and meaning of a public and authorized Confession of Faith? But, in the mean time, when the principles or doctrines that men have vented are not impartially examined and judged, as to their agreeableness or disagreeableness to that scheme of divine truth laid down from the word of God in our Confession of Faith, in this case our Confession is of no significancy to distinguish betwixt such as make a profession of the truth, and others; it gives no distinct nor determinate sound in the church, it is given up and abandoned as a standard of soundness in the faith: And that this is the state of matters at present in this national church, as she is represented in her present judicatories, is too evident from the several instances I have given of her procedure and conduct in the doctrinal errors that have been brought to her bar.

From what is above observed, the reader may judge what ground our author has for that confidence wherewith he expresses himself, p. 26. "I hope, says he, and am confident, that nothing like these (*viz.* errors everfive of the foundation) is to be found in the church of Scotland; for she adheres to all the doctrines contained in our excellent Confession of Faith." Notwithstanding of our author's confident boast, it is ground of lamentation, that even such errors are to be found in the church of Scotland; and it is also evident from what is already observed, that the judicatories are so far from adhering to all the articles of our excellent Confession of Faith, that they have dismissed such errors from their bar, without a direct and express testimony against any of them. What he adds concerning the engagements, that such as are licensed to preach the gospel, or ordained to the holy ministry, come under, to "assert, maintain and defend the doctrine contained in the said Confession;" and their express disowning "all Popish, Arian, Socinian, &c. and other doctrines, tenets and opinions whatsoever, which are contrary to, and inconsistent with the foresaid Confession of Faith:" Neither doth this support our author in his confidence; in regard such as are licensed to preach, or

ordained to the holy ministry, may reckon that they may warrantably sign our Confession of Faith, and make the above solemn renunciation, in a consistency with their adopting Masters Simson's and Campbell's scheme; and that for this reason, Because the present judicatories, who require the said engagement and declaration, had the above hainous errors under their consideration, and have neither found nor declared them to be contrary to the doctrine held forth from the word of God in our Confession of Faith; neither have they found Masters Simson's nor Campbell's propositions to be either Popish, Arian, Socinian or Arminian doctrines. It may be reasonably judged, that when a confession is signed or any renunciation of the above nature is made, that both are done according to the declared sense and meaning of the who require the said renunciation and subscription: Can it then be imagined, that when some doctrinal errors have been brought to the bar of our judicatories, and when they have refused once and again to condemn them in express terms, as contrary to our Confession of Faith; can it, I say, be imagined, that such who are solemnly engaged to adhere to the doctrine of the said confession, should thereby think themselves engaged against such doctrinal points as the judicatories have refused to condemn, or that they should look upon any of Masters Simson or Campbell's propositions to be either Popish, Arian or Arminian, which the judicatories have refused to condemn as such? Therefore there is no ground for what our author further adds for the support of his confidence, "If there be such abominable hypocrites, acting below men, as profess, promise and engage contrary to what may be their sentiments, this is to be lamented, but cannot be absolutely prevented in any church." There would have been some truth in what our author asserts, if the judicatories had discharged their duty, in giving a particular and faithful testimony against the errors mentioned; but, since it is otherwise, they may judge with themselves, that they are not engaged to any thing contrary to their own sentiments even when they are the same with these of Masters Simson and Campbell; and consequently they may reckon, that the charge of being abominable hypocrites cannot in justice be laid against them.

Before I pass this head, it deserves to be noticed, that the management of the present judicatories, in the errors that have

been brought to their bar, has been not only different from, but the reverse of, the conduct and practice of such ecclesiastical synods and assemblies as in former or latter times have faithfully displayed a banner for truth: As for instance, The first four general councils did particularly and expressly condemn the several gross and dangerous errors that did spring up in the church, whereby the true Deity of the Son and Holy Ghost was denied, or the two natures of the Redeemer confounded, or whereby the unity of his person was overthrown; and they also asserted the truth in opposition to the terms in which it was either impugned or denied by the several adversaries. Likewise the famous synod of Dort did the same, with the several Arminian errors that were brought to their bar. Likewise the famous churches of France, when Piscator, a very considerable divine, published his peculiar opinion concerning the active obedience of Christ, though he was not a member of that church of France, yet they did, in their national assembly at Gap, condemn particularly Piscator's error, contrary to their Confession of Faith; and warn'd synods, presbyteries and sessions, to have a particular eye upon persons tainted with his error, be they ministers or private Christians: And, in their national assembly held at Rochelle, they assert the truth in express terms, in opposition unto Piscator's error, who denied the imputation of the active obedience of Christ; the words of that synod are, "The whole obedience of Christ, both in his life and death, is imputed unto us, for the full remission of our sins, and acceptance unto eternal life *." The national church of France did testify in the same manner, not only against errors vented amongst themselves, but against errors vented in neighbouring churches, whereby they might be in danger of being tainted; till they began to decline from their reformation-purity, as in the case of the Universalists, which was brought before the national synods at Alanson and Charenton; and their declining did gradually increase till desolation came upon them.

And, since our author has perused the acts and decisions of the national synods of France, he could not but observe an agreeable harmony between the methods taken in reforming times, by the churches of France and Scotland, for preserving the purity of doctrine, by an exact and impartial exercise of discipline, in condemning all errors whatsoever. Likewise

he could not but observe, that the present state of the church of Scotland in a great measure resembles that of the church of France when upon the decline; and that the measures taken by their national synods, when errors and erroneous persons were brought before them, exactly corresponds with these taken by our present assemblies, of which we have a clear evidence in the above instance. And as this was a forerunner of their ruin, so while we follow their example, which standing upon record, should be a warning to future generations, 'tis to be fear'd that, in the righteous judgment of God sometime hence strangers may have occasion to say of us, as the collector of these monuments says of them, "O that the
 " generation which succeeded the first reformers, had not lax'd
 " the reins! How happy might they have been! In the morning
 " ing of the reformation they were fair as the moon, clear as
 " the sun, and terrible as an army with banners. The greatest
 " princes of France submitted their necks to this golden
 " yoke of Christ. A national synod was formidable to the
 " most daring sinner. Their discipline, duly and prudently
 " managed, preserved the purity of doctrine, worship and
 " morals amongst them *." Had our author duly attended to these things, I am perswaded he had not been so forward to acquit the church of Scotland, and condemn those who oppose the measures taken by her present judicatories, with respect to errors and erroneous persons brought before them.

From the whole of what has been said, since Masters Simson and Campbell have pled at the bar of the judicatories that their principles were nowise contrary to our Confession of Faith, and since the judicatories have not declared their several errors to be contrary to the same, tho' the above-mentioned and other gross errors have been vented by them, hence it is plain, that our Confession of Faith cannot any more be judged a fixed standard of orthodoxy or soundness of the faith, at least with respect to these important points that have been brought to the bar of the said judicatories. And from what has been said, I may likewise draw the following conclusion, That this national church, as she is represented by her present judicatories, has not the character I have mentioned of the church of the living God, in regard she does not uphold and maintain, assert and confess the truth, in opposition unto the many dangerous errors that have been vented amongst us, which are either evasive of, or very nearly

* *Quick's Syn. Vol. I. Intro. p. 16.*

fect, the foundation of our Christian faith and practice; and consequently we cannot have union, conjunction or coalescence with them, as parts and members of that same ecclesiastical body; especially when it is considered, that, by their above conduct and management, they have broke and dissolved that bond of our ecclesiastical union and communion, which consists in our common *omologia*, or joint external profession of the same faith.

I reckon the argument for secession, as it is stated upon the head of doctrine, to be of considerable weight; and therefore I shall briefly take notice of some things alledged by the author of the Essay, to take off the force thereof: And I must judge, from the high commendations that have been given to this performance, he has offered the force and strength of what these who warmly condemn our secession, have to say for themselves on this as well as on other heads. Our author, p. 113. states the objection of Separatists, as he calls them, upon the head of doctrine after his own way, and spends several pages in his answers unto it; but the reader may easily see, that he has never stated the argument in its true light and due force, and therefore his answer unto it is only according to his way and manner of stating it. I shall not weary the reader with every thing that might be noticed upon this head; I shall only take notice of some things, on which the author seems to lay the greatest stress and weight. He refers to what he had said in the beginning of his fourth chapter, which he reckons may be a sufficient answer to the objection. I have already considered what he has offered in the said place, and therefore shall not insist further upon it. He adds, p. 114. "That, whatever heterodox or erroneous principles some may be leavened with, they do not, nor dare they vent and openly avow them;" and concludes. "While they are not owned and defended, they cannot be charged upon the church of Scotland." But, have not Masters Simson and Campbell openly avowed their principles? have they not owned and defended them at the bar? and have not the judicatories refused expressly to condemn their errors? Therefore, according to our author's own reasoning, their erroneous principles may justly be charged upon the judicatories of this national church.

The author of the Essay proceeds to give some more particular answers to the objection, as he states it: He owns, p.

115. that Mr. Simson "was too easy past, *anno 1717*"—
 And, "That it was the fault of the church of Scotland,
 " that she did not free that zealous faithful servant of Christ,
 " Mr. James Webster, from the burden of a prosecution by
 " libel; seeing that affair was no personal concern of his own.
 But if our author had said that it was the sin of this church,
 and that it is a ground of mourning to this day, that Mr.
 Simson's errors were past in general terms at that time, with-
 out any particular express testimony against any of his gross
 propositions, he had spoke more to the purpose. Our author
 adds, that "Mr. Simson (upon the first libel) declared his ad-
 " herence to our Confession of Faith and doctrines therein
 " contained, and disowned the errors opposite thereto where-
 " with he was charged." Who doubts of Mr. Simson's de-
 claring his adherence to our confession? This both he and Mr.
 Campbell always did; they still pled the doctrines they taught
 were agreeable to the doctrines contained in the confessions.
 And this is what was the sin of the judicatories, that they did
 not declare their peculiar doctrines to be what in very deed
 they are, *viz.* errors, and contrary to our Confession of Faith.
 As for what is said of Mr. Simson's disowning the errors op-
 posite to our Confession, tho' our author mentions this once
 and again, yet he clouds and darkens the matter after his or-
 dinary manner. If he means that Mr. Simson refused that he
 had taught any errors opposite to the doctrine contained in
 our confession, this is very true; for Mr. Simson always refus-
 ed this charge: But if, by disowning errors, is meant his dis-
 owning the erroneous propositions which in his answers to his
 first libel he asserts and defends as truths, agreeable to the
 word of God and our Confession of Faith, and which the com-
 mittee of assembly 1717 found he continued to teach, it is
 if I may use one of our author's phrases, an imposing upon
 the world when our author affirms, he has disowned the er-
 rors wherewith he was charged; and I may challenge the au-
 thor of the Essay to point me out any of his said errors which
 he has disowned.

The author of the Essay gives it as his humble opinion
 against the gross and damnable errors in Mr. Simson's second li-
 bel, that, "considering what an affront was put upon the
 " great God our Saviour by his erroneous doctrine, he justly
 " deserved deposition from the holy ministry for what was
 " found proven against him at that time." But yet, to ex-
 tenuate

ennate the matter, he subjoins some declarations and acknowledgements which he alledges Mr. Simson made; and these are set down with the ordinary marks of a citation, but he has not directed us to the place where they are to be found; and the truth is, they are nowhere to be found in any of his acknowledgements, recorded in the state of the process, according to the terms in which they are laid by our author: And yet I find the act of assembly, dismissing the process, make use of the same expressions with our author, whereby Mr. Simson's acknowledgements are represented in fuller terms than what we have from himself in the said state of the process. But yet, after all these endeavours to dress up his acknowledgements in the most favourable manner, it is certain that he never made any till he was brought unto a pinch, and then his acknowledgements are in very general terms. Tho' in his first letter to the presbytery of Glasgow he vents such expressions as plainly derogate from the essential glory of the most high God our Saviour, and tho' in his other papers in process he also subverts the scripture-doctrine of the Trinity, yet he never makes any acknowledgement of the indignity that he has done to our glorious Redeemer; he never makes the least acknowledgement, that ever he vented any thing contrary to the doctrine concerning the adoreable Trinity, as it is held forth from the word of God in our Confession of Faith: And therefore the everend and worthy author of the Enquiry, formerly mentioned, had just ground for the following judicious observe on Mr. Simson's Declarations, "Which (says he) in words may bear a sound sense, but in my opinion are very little to be regarded, while he understands them in a sense consistent with his former papers, and does not ingenuously retract his Arian tenets therein vented *."

It is alledged by the Essay, p. 116. "That the church of Scotland was so far from approving his errors, that as she found them relevant to infer censure, which was a plain condemning of them; so, notwithstanding of all said by him for alleviating of his offence, the assembly 1728 censured him with the sentence of suspension, &c." To which it is answered, That it cannot be alledged that the judicatories have ever found any of the errors contained in the first process against Mr. Simson relevant to infer censure, and consequently they have never plainly condemned them; and

the like may be said of the errors vented by Mr. Campbell. And therefore the argument for secession, as is stated upon the head of doctrinal errors, stands still in its force. And as to the relevancy that was found in the articles of Mr. Simson's second libel, it is only a general relevancy, and none of them are particularly declared to be contrary to the word of God or our Confession of Faith. And here it must be observed, that, as the libel is laid, propositions *not necessary to be taught in divinity, and which give more occasion to strife than to promote edification*, are relevant to infer censure as well as those that are expressly contrary to the word of God and our Confession of Faith. Now, in determining the relevancy of the several articles of libel against Mr. Simson, the assembly do not determine whether the propositions libelled are such as are expressly contrary to the word of God and our Confession of Faith, or if they are only such as are not necessary to be taught in divinity: Hence, notwithstanding of what is alleged by our author about finding the articles of libel relevant to infer censure, the judicatories have never yet declared them to be contrary to the word of God and our Confession of Faith; and consequently the truth in these important points has never yet been expressly asserted, in opposition to the terms in which it has been opposed and subverted. With respect to the censure inflicted upon Mr. Simson, tho' our author declares that he justly deserved deposition, on account of the affront he had put upon the great God our Saviour by his erroneous doctrine; yet he thinks fit to make an apology, in the page last cited, for such as voted only for his suspension, and consequently for the conduct of the judicatories of this church in passing him with a censure nowise adequate to his crime and offence: "And (says he) 'tis well known there were sundry in the assembly fully of the mind he deserved deposition, who yet, from apprehensions of as great or greater damage to follow upon this to the church of Christ in Scotland, they only voted for his suspension; and I apprehend it flowed more from this, than lenity to him, that he was not deposed." And here, by the by, I may remark, that, if some others had used the terms of the church of Christ in Scotland, a grievous charge had been brought against them; but in regard I judge they may be used without any derogation from the divine warrant and authority for national churches, therefore I shall pass them. In the above words

words of our author, the reader is amused with some general and dark expressions about great or greater damage to follow to the church upon the depositions of an Arian, than if he was only suspended; he should have told us plainly, what these great or greater apprehended damages were: Would the deposition of one, who, as our author acknowledges, had put an affront upon the great God our Saviour, occasioned a division in the assembly, or a rent in the church of Scotland? Or, was the sentence of suspension agreed upon, to compromise the matter betwixt such as were for deposing him, and such as were for no censure at all, or, as it is expressed in the act concluding the process, with such as give it as their opinion that he ought to be treated with more tenderness, in respect of the declarations he had made, and the alleviations that are said to be found in the course of the process? If this is our author's meaning, it is ground of lamentation that matters were come to such a pass in a national assembly of the once famous reformed church of Scotland, that there should be any dispute or hesitation about holding in ministerial communion one who had endeavoured to rob the Son of God of his true Deity; especially when it is considered what other dangerous errors he had obstinately taught. Our author makes liberal acknowledgements that Mr. Simson deserved deposition, and yet he makes use of all his art and skill to extenuate the sin of the judicatories; but I humbly judge they have a very bad apologist for them, when he tells us of great or greater damage to follow upon their casting out an Arian from ministerial communion with them. If a proper and due testimony against an open affront put upon the Son of God was neglected, in order to compromise differences among themselves, it is a sin that lies at the door of this national church, and for which we have ground to fear that the Son of God, who hath said, *All the churches shall know that I am he which searcheth the reins and hearts*, may yet plead a controversy against us. Our author subjoins an evidence "that the judicatories of the church of Scotland are neither so corrupt in doctrine, nor so lukewarm in the cause of Christ, as Separatists represent;" namely, that, "According to the brethren's first testimony, p. 49. it was contrary to the declared mind of most of the presbyteries of this national church by far, that the assembly 1729 did rest in the sentence of suspension against Mr. Simson." But then, how comes

comes it to pass that there was such an universal silent submission to the above sentence of that assembly? How comes it to pass that there was not a presbytery in all the church of Scotland remonstrating, before the assembly 1730, against a deed that was done contrary to the declared mind of most part of presbyteries? Ah! how soon was this concern for truth, which our author insinuates, and this zeal for the cause of Christ cooled! Yea, so very low did it turn of a sudden, that, at the assemblies 1730 and 1731, very few synods and presbyteries sent instructions, representations or petitions for an *act assertory* of the truth, and a seasonable warning against the errors of the time; any goodness that appeared amongst us was like the morning-cloud and the early dew that soon passeth away.

With respect to Mr. Campbell's errors, the author of the Essay reckons that his erroneous propositions that were under the consideration of the judicatories were only "uncertain expressions," and that "his explications might be found and orthodox," p. 119. and he proceeds, p. 121. to purge Masters Simson and Campbell of heresy, if the word *heretic* is taken in its strict sense. And here it is proper to notice the reason given by our author, why neither of them can be called heretics, when the word is taken in the strict sense; "For, says he, none of them offered to defend the erroneous positions as libelled, or in the sense alledged against them." Their several positions were laid in their libels as errors; and it is very true, that none of them were so weak as to defend their positions under the notion of errors. As for what our author adds, *or in the sense alledged against them*; our author does not alledge that they retracted any of their propositions, but only that they did not own them in the sense alledged against them: Therefore, according to him, they gave a sound sense and meaning unto the several propositions that were libelled against them. I hope it will be allowed, that a sense and meaning, opposed to our received and approved principles, was the sense in which Masters Simson and Campbell's positions were libelled against them; and it is very evident that they have all along defended their opinions in a sense directly opposite to the received principles of the church of Scotland: Therefore, whatever art they have used, now and then, in colouring their errors with fly distinctions; yet it must be owned by all who understand their

their scheme, that they have defended their erroneous positions as libelled, or in the sense alledged against them: And, if our author refuse this, let him give an instance of such erroneous propositions as Masters Simson and Campbell have explained into a sound sense, and such as he will venture his own character upon, that they are sound and orthodox; and, until he do this, I must either hold him as giving up the question as he himself has stated it upon the head of doctrine, or that he has not understood their principles: For when he says that Mr. Campbell's explications might be sound and orthodox, to use one of his own phrases, some may alledge that it is as much as if he had said he does not know whether they were so or not.

The author of the Essay observes, from the Presbytery's act and testimony, p. 66. that they affirm, "That the assembly 1736 adopted professor Campbell's principle concerning self-love." And this they had good reason to affirm; and our author has never attempted to disprove any of the reasons and grounds that they have offered, why they judge it so manifest and plain, "But, says our author, seeing they own some worthy men in that assembly did not notice this, it might been charitably thought this was a mere oversight in the assembly." But he does not fairly report the words of the presbytery's act and testimony; their words are *, "The case is so plain of itself, and from what has been observed, that nothing is necessary to be added, except to lament that God has left this church so far as to adopt this error, and that he so far deserted some worthy men as not to notice it, and testify against it;" and this they had just ground to say. Our author adds, "And that they had no design of adopting this proposition is evident, in that not so much as one person in all the assembly did speak a word against it; for it cannot be denied, some in that assembly had the interest of truth as much at heart as the brethren themselves, &c." But this is so far from being an evidence, that the assembly had no design of adopting Mr. Campbell's proposition concerning self-love according to his sense and explication of it, that it is an evidence to the contrary. And what tho' there were worthy men in that assembly, that had the interest of truth at heart, who suffered it to pass without opposition? This was indeed an evidence

* *Act and Testimony, p. 66.*

dence that they were in this matter, as the presbytery speak, so far deserted of God, as not to notice it and testify against it; but it is far from being an evidence that the bulk of that assembly did not take up Mr. Campbell's proposition in the sense in which he understood it, neither was it an evidence that the assembly's conduct in this matter was a bare oversight, as our author speaks. And when he adds, "That charity obliged to think that the assembly hath not wickedly departed from the Lord in this matter, nor adopted this proposition as their principle;" Tho' none will affirm that the assembly adopted any proposition under the notion of error, yet it is a wicked departing from the Lord, when darkness is put for light, and when evil is called good, or when any church-judicatory embrace error as if it were a divine truth. Our author likewise adds, "As the assembly 1736 declared they had not passed a judgment on Mr. Campbell's quarrelled positions, so, tho' the following assembly 1737 did not think the former assembly had given just ground for the above charge, yet they declared their stedfast adherence to the principle of this church, as contained in our Confession and Catechisms, as to our chief end in every thing we do; which was a plain disowning that principle of self-love." But, did not Mr. Campbell in like manner always declare his adherence to the principles of this church? And did he not attempt to reconcile his principles concerning self-love with our Confession and Catechisms? Therefore the above general declaration of the assembly 1737 leaves us still at an uncertainty what is the doctrine of this church concerning the principle of self-love, in regard Mr. Campbell may in a consistency with his own principle, as it is adopted by the assembly 1736, acknowledge and declare in the same terms with the assembly 1737: Especially when it is considered, that the only reason that is given, to prove that the assembly 1736 did not adopt Mr. Campbell's principle is, That the said assembly gave no judgment or formal sentence upon the report of their committee; whereas it is evident that the said assembly do in express terms declare, That "the examining and stating the matter as has been done by their committee, is sufficient for cautioning against the errors that some at first supposed Mr. Campbell was guilty of." And it is no less plain, that the committee, in examining and stating the matter, have approved of the

the above erroneous proposition, in respect that the committee have declared "their opinion and good hopes that Mr. Campbell had no unsound meaning in asserting self-love to be the sole principle, standard and motive of all religious actions; because he had declared before them, That, by his saying that the chief or sole motive to virtuous and religious actions was the desire of our own happiness, he meant no more but that our delight in the glory and honour of God was that chief motive; which is the proposition *in terminis*, which the presbytery in their act have asserted to be an error adopted by the assembly 1736.

I shall here consider another exception laid by our author against secession on the head of doctrine, Essay, p. 3. "The act of assembly 1736, says he, anent preaching is a further standing testimony of the orthodoxy of this church, and of her concern to have sound doctrine taught and preached by all her ministers." And, p. 142. The said act is an act assertory of most of the great truths which had been controverted." And, p. 175. it is called a "Warning at least to all ministers and preachers against the errors and blasphemous heresies vented among us." But the above act of assembly, tho' it contains some good and excellent things, is not an act assertory of the truth, in direct and express opposition to the many damnable errors that have been brought unto the bar of our assemblies; neither does it bear any particular warning against such dangerous errors, in the terms in which they have been asserted and maintained at the bar of the judicatories. Besides, if the said act is reckoned assertory of the truth, or a warning against the errors of the time, what a very inconsistent part did that assembly act with themselves, when they dismissed from their bar a scheme of dangerous principles vented by Mr. Campbell without any testimony against them? And when this assembly did the one day build again what they pretended to destroy the other, can their act, which our author calls assertory of most of the truths controverted, be reckoned a standing testimony of their orthodoxy, or concern to have sound doctrine taught and preached? Nay, have they not rather by such an inconsistent procedure made themselves transgressors? Gal. ii. 18. To prevent repetition, I shall here also notice what our author affirms, p. 174. *viz.* "As to the putting a bar to violent intrusions, the general assembly 1736 revived that old act
" which

“ which declares against settling church-officers contrary to
 “ the will of the congregation.” But, what bar have they
 put upon violent intrusions, when with the same breath they
 appoint the presbytery of Stirling to proceed to the settle-
 ment of the presentee to the parish of Denny, and to be at
 pains to bring the people of that parish to submit to the de-
 cisions of the church? Let every unprejudiced person judge,
 if such inconsistent proceedings, in a judicatory that bears the
 character of a court of Christ, have not a direct tendency to
 expose and cast loose our principles, instead of asserting and
 maintaining them.

Our author, p. 122. alledges, That “ the not censuring
 “ professor Simson and professor Campbell according to the
 “ demerit of their offence, can be no such step of defection
 “ as is ground of separation: For, says he, sometimes the
 “ church of Christ hath judged it convenient to pass the er-
 “ roneous without inflicting any ecclesiastical censure for
 “ their offence.” And the proof he brings of this is taken
 from Acts xv. where he observes, That the first New-Testa-
 ment general assembly or council, tho’ they condemned the
 corrupt and erroneous doctrine that was vented, “ yet, says
 “ he, we read not a word of any censure inflicted upon the
 “ preachers or teachers thereof.” But our author would
 remember, that the secession from the present judicatories is
 not stated simply upon their not inflicting due censure upon
 the erroneous, but especially upon their dismissing them from
 their bar, without asserting the truth in opposition unto their
 errors, and without an express condemnation of these errors;
 and in this respect their conduct was the reverse of what was
 the practice of that famous synod, who particularly and ex-
 pressly condemned the corrupt doctrines that had then sprung
 up in the church. When our author affirms that there was
 not a word of any censure inflicted upon the foresaid corrupt
 preachers and teachers, he unwarily pleads the cause of the
 Independents, who affirm the very same thing; but, in op-
 position to them, our Presbyterian divines do affirm, that
 this synod at Jerusalem did “ put forth a critic or censuring
 “ power, stigmatizing the false teachers with the infamous
 “ brand of troubling the church with words, and subverting
 “ of souls, Acts xv 24.” This was indeed a very high
 censure, as the author may find from the London ministers
 in their *Jus Div. Reg. Eccl.* p. 226, and there he will find
 like with

likewise a more solid reason than that imaginary one which he alledges and pretends to answer, why that synod did not proceed against the false teachers by the censure of excommunication. And it is plain that the point in question before the said synod was a point that had not been determined before that time in the Christian church; and therefore it was neither seasonable nor needful to proceed to a higher censure than that which was already past against these false teachers, until it should appear that they persisted in their course, and were obstinate in the same, notwithstanding of the foregoing synodical determination. But tho' the doctrinal errors which have been brought to the bar of our judicatories are such as stand condemned by our Confession of Faith, and the Confessions of other reformed churches, yet, if the judicatories of this national church had condemned the said errors, and declared the teachers of them to be such as have troubled us with words, and subverters of souls, tho' they had not proceeded to any higher censure, I humbly judge the argument had not been quite so strong, as now it is, for stating a secession from them upon the head of doctrine.

I have now traced our author in the several exceptions against our argument for secession, as it is stated upon the conduct of the judicatories on the affair of doctrine; and it is plain from what is observed, that the tendency of his reasoning is to vindicate the conduct, or extenuate the sin, of the present judicatories in the whole of their management about this weighty and important matter. As for the treatment he gives some expressions contained in the paper given in by my reverend brother. Mr. Mair. to the presbytery, together with his retreat to the assembly 1638, and his other common topics, which I know not how oft are repeated in his Essay, I shall consider them in their proper place; only, before I pass this head, I cannot but notice what a small account this author makes of the grievous backslidings of the church of Scotland from her reformation-purity: "For (says he, p. 122) most of the things laid to the charge of the church of Scotland at this day are only omissions." And, p. 174. when he mentions it as one of the principal grounds of secession, that no warning hath been emitted against errors and blasphemous heresies vented amongst us, "For my part (says he) I should be glad to see such a warning;—but the neglect of this is only an omission."

It seems that such omissions make but a little impression upon his own mind; and he endeavours what he can, that his reader may make as little account of them as he does. Tho' our secession is stated upon commissions as well as omissions, yet I wish our author would consider that omissions are so hainous and grievous in the sight of God, that, when sentence is past against men at the great day, omissions are only mentioned, Mat. xxv. 41 42 &c. *For I was an hungred, and ye gave me no meat* &c. Omissions may even turn the purest churches into synagogues of Satan; if the erroneous are not censured, and if error is not condemned, a society professing to be a religious society, may soon become a herd of blasphemous Arians and Socinians, and of wicked Arminians, or of the like gross subverters of the truth, and of the souls of men: And therefore, whatever the author of the Essay, or others, may think of the conduct of the present judicatories, in not condemning plainly the errors of the day, and in refusing to assert the truth in opposition unto them, yet from what is observed it may be evident, that their omissions in this matter are such, whereby this national church as she is represented in her present judicatories has forfeit a claim to the scripture-character of the church of the living God, in regard she does not uphold, support, maintain and confess the truth, in opposition to the errors of the day: Yea, they are such, whereby she does not answer one of the special ends of the Lord's rearing up and erecting a visible church upon the earth, namely, That there may be an open and public profession and confession of the truth, to the honour, the praise and the glory of our great Immanuel, who builds the temple of the Lord, and bears all the glory. Again, these omissions are such, whereby our Confession of Faith is no more a fixed standard and test of orthodoxy and soundness in the faith amongst the present judicatories, or these that are in conjunction with them; and likewise, the said omissions are such, whereby she has practically let go, in her foresaid capacity, these truths that were once received and confessed amongst us, while our Confession of Faith and the several articles thereof were maintained and held in their genuine sense and meaning. In fine, the omissions mentioned are such, whereby one principal bond of our ecclesiastical unity is dissolved and broke by the present judicatories. From all which it appears, that our secession from them as it

stated upon the head of doctrine is both just and war-
 antable. I shall conclude this head with an instance or two,
 besides these I have already named, to shew how averse the
 primitive Christians were from the very appearance of any re-
 gious communion with the erroneous. Mr. Claud reports,
 that, as for those who taught false doctrine, the primitive
 church never had any union with them. "And, says he, not
 only the antients had no communion with them, but, to
 shew how necessary and indispensable they judged a separa-
 tion from them to be, they went so far as to refuse com-
 munion with the orthodox themselves, when either by sur-
 prize or weakness, or some other interest they had receiv-
 ed heretics into their communion, altho' as to themselves
 they had kept their faith in its purity*." He gives two
 examples of this strictness in the primitive church; the one
 of Gregory the father of Gregory Nazianzen, who, being
 deceived by a fallacious writing, gave the communion to A-
 rians; whereupon "all the monks of his diocese, with the
 greatest part of his church, separated themselves from him,
 altho' they well knew that he had not changed his mind,
 nor embraced heresy." The other instance he gives is that
 of the orthodox of the church of Rome, who refused to hold
 communion with Felix their bishop, "because he held com-
 munion with the Arians, altho' he entirely held the Creed
 of the council of Nice." Claud mentions these instances,
 only to shew how far their aversion went, which they had
 from holding communion with the Arians, tho' he does not
 absolutely approve of the above carriage: Neither can I justifi-
 the carriage of Gregory's church, who separated from him
 when he was imposed upon by a fallacious writing; but their
 carriage would have been more justifiable, if they had been
 in the same circumstances with us, who have to deal with ju-
 ratories, who, without any imposition upon them, have
 held an Arian in ministerial and Christian communion with
 them, and have obstinately refused to give the church faith-
 ful warning against his errors. The same author likewise
 reports †, that Faustinus, in his treatise against the Arians,
 says, "If any one did not believe that the society of the Ari-
 ans could be rendered culpable, under a pretence that he
 had the testimony of his own conscience, which did not
 accuse him of having violated or renounced the faith there;

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"it

* Claud's Hist. Des. Part 3. p. 8. † Ibid, p. 25.

“ it belonged to such a one to take heed and to examine him-
 “ self: But, as for me, the cause of God being concerned, I
 “ judge myself bound to be more precautioned, and to have
 “ a greater fear than those persons have.” I shall only add
 what Dupin reports of Hilary bishop of Poitiers, who, hav-
 ing come to the synod that met at Selucia, *anno* 359, did, at
 his first entrance into the synod, make confession of his faith
 according to the decisions of the council of Nice, upon which
 he took his seat in the synod; but, when he observed that
 many of the bishops were Arians, he departed, and would
 not be any more present with them*. It is to be observed,
 that the synod admitted of the above confession of his faith;
 yet he would have no church-communion where Arians were
 sitting as members. Many other instances to this purpose
 might be given of the primitive Christians refusing religious
 or church-communion with the adversaries of truth, even
 where no such thing was expressly required as an approbation
 of the principles of the erroneous.

S E C T. II.

*Wherein it is proven that the present Judicatories of this Na-
 tional Church are Tyrannical in the Administration of Go-
 vernment and Discipline.*

AS every society in the world must have its own distinct
 government within itself, without which it cannot
 subsist, but must needs fall into confusion and disorder; so
 the church of Christ is a society which must needs have some
 order and government within itself, for its own preservation
 and support: And therefore the Lord Jesus, who is faithful
 in all his house as a Son, hath not left his church destitute
 of such a mean, which is absolutely necessary for her preserva-
 tion and subsistence in her present militant state; he upon
 whose shoulders the government is laid, and who is, by his
 Father's designation and appointment, *King over Zion the house*
of his holiness, hath settled the order and government of his
 own spiritual kingdom; he has not left it to the arbitrary
 will and pleasure of men, what model and form of govern-
 ment should be set up in his church; he has not left it to men

* *Biblioth. Aust. Eccles. Tom. 2. p. 138.*

to give laws unto his subjects, in these things that concern them as they are they subjects of his spiritual kingdom; neither has he left it to men to give officers and ordinances unto his house according to their arbitrary will and pleasure: He has declared his mind concerning all these things plainly in his word; there he has told us what officers he has appointed in his house, and after what manner they are to be set over his flock and heritage; there he has also declared his mind concerning the courts of his spiritual kingdom, and all the office bearers in his kingdom have their several instructions delivered them, not from men, but from him who is the only Lord and Lawgiver to his subjects; and it is upon their highest peril if they transgress them. Hence all the subjects of his kingdom are charged with the greatest solemnity in the following manner, Ezek. xlv. 5. *And the Lord said unto me, Son of man, mark well, and behold with thine eyes, and hear with thine ears all that I say unto thee concerning all the ordinances of the house of the Lord, and all the laws thereof, and mark well the entering in of the house, with every going forth of the sanctuary.* As for the officers of Christ's spiritual kingdom, the apostle gives us a roll of them, both extraordinary and ordinary, 1 Cor. xii. 28. The extraordinary officers were apostles, prophets, such as are endued with the power of working miracles, gifts of healings, and diversities of tongues; but, the scripture canon being now compleated, the church does not stand in need of any such officers. The ordinary officers set in the church are teachers; helps or deacons, who have the oversight of the poor; governments, that is, governors or rulers; by whom the elder that only is intended, the abstract being put for the concrete. For the manner how these officers are to be given to the church, they must be set over her by her own choice, call and consent, Acts i. 23. and vi. 3, 5. and xiv. 28. Likewise, they must be authorized and set apart unto their respective offices, Acts vi. 6. 1 Tim. iv. 14. Rom. x. 15. The former respects their nomination or designation unto their several offices, and this belongs unto the whole church; the latter respects their authoritative mission, and this belongs only to such office bearers of the church as have power and authority from the Lord Jesus for that effect.

As for the courts of Christ's spiritual kingdom, these are either congregational elderships, presbyterial meetings, or synodical

nodical assemblies. As for synodical assemblies, these are either provincial or national, and, if the state of the church did admit them, *OEcumenical*. We have the divine pattern and warrant for such assemblies, Acts xv. with Acts xv. 4, 5. With respect to presbyterial meetings, the divine pattern and warrant is very plain for them; as Acts xiii. 1, 2, 3, where we find several teachers or ministers of the word jointly ministering unto the Lord, and at his commandment and direction exercising acts of jurisdiction, ver. 3. as also, the name *presbytery* is expressed in scripture, 1 Tim. iv. 14. holding forth a society or body of elders associated together for the exercise of government and discipline in the church. Our Presbyterian divines have made the same thing evident from the churches of Corinth, Jerusalem, Ephesus, &c. which were Presbyterial churches, under the inspection and government of their pastors and elders associated in a presbyterial capacity. I refer the reader to their writings, particularly to the *Form of Church-government*, received and approved by this church anno 1645. I shall only further observe upon this head; That presbyterial courts appear to be in a proper and strict sense *radical judicatories*, as is evinced by the reverend and worthy author of the *State and Duty of the Church of Scotland &c.* published anno 1732, p. 95. for the following reasons amongst others; 1st, "A church-session or congregational eldership supposes and implies a presbytery, as morally necessary towards its erection, and the ordination of its constituent members, without whose ordination that session could not in an ordinary way have been erected; and, without a presbytery previously existing these its members the ministers and elders could not have been ordained. 2^{dly}, A synod provincial or national is far from pre-existing a presbytery, that it supposes and implies in its very nature and constitution the pre-existence of presbyteries, as the matter of its being and erection. With respect to congregational elderships, the divine warrant for them is concluded by just and necessary consequence, from several places of the holy scriptures; as for instance, where there is mention of a plurality of churches in the one presbyterial church of Corinth, 1 Cor. xiv 34. as likewise where there is mention of the church in such a house, Rom. xv. 1 Cor. xvi. 19. Col. iv. 15. Philem. 2. As these churches were single congregations, so the London ministers do observe

observe*, that these single congregations have the name and nature of churches, and therefore behoved to have the ordinary standing officers that are set in the church, viz. pastors or teachers, governments or elders ruling well, and helps or deacons; and, if such single congregations have the ordinary standing officers, they must needs have likewise the power of rule and government, for the edification of the body of Christ in matters peculiarly belonging unto them, and which in ordinary cases, according to the rule of the word, fall under their immediate cognizance in these single or particular congregations.

With respect to that power and authority that belongs to the several courts of Christ's spiritual kingdom, I shall not take upon me particularly to define or determine it; only it is not a mere consultative power and authority: When no more is given unto the courts of Christ's spiritual kingdom, the authority of the King of Zion is not represented or manifested in them; they are robbed of the key of discipline, which is given by the Lord Jesus to the office-bearers of his house; they have no censuring power with respect to heresies, scandal, and obstinacy: If their power is only consultative, the censures of reproof, admonition, suspension from sealing ordinances, and excommunication, cannot be inflicted by the several ecclesiastical courts above-mentioned; tho' the power of censure is very necessary for preserving soundness in the faith, and purity in the walk and conversation of church-members. But yet tho' ecclesiastical courts may proceed in an authoritative manner, in the name of the Head and King of Zion, their power and authority is limited, it is a power for edification; they have not a lordly and magisterial, but a ministerial and stewardly authority; they have not a legislative authority, tho' they have a power to declare and publish the genuine sense and meaning of the laws of Christ's spiritual kingdom, in opposition to corrupters and subverters of the same; they have a power to apply the doctrines of faith, or the truths of God declared and laid down in his word, against emergent heresies and errors; they have also a power to apply the censures of Christ's house to the erroneous and scandalous: They are not lords over our faith and conscience, nor the rule of our faith and practice, but helps to both; all the office-bearers in the church are given her, and consequently

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* *Jus Div. Reg. Eccles.* p. 187.

consequently all ecclesiastical courts are instituted and appointed, for the *perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ*, Eph. iv. 12. and according to our Confession, Chap. xxxi. §. 2, 3, 4. But if ecclesiastical courts rule over the flock of Christ with rigour, if they refuse to publish and declare the laws and ordinances of the Lord Jesus in opposition to gainfayers; if they walk contrary to the laws of Christ's spiritual kingdom, or the instructions that they have received from him; if they wound, scatter and break the heritage of God; if they screen and protect the erroneous or scandalous; if they turn the edge of discipline against such as cleave to the truth, and testify against iniquity; then they are unfaithful to their trust, and pervert the keys of government and discipline, and they thereby forfeit their claim to the exercise of the keys, till they repent and return to their duty: And, in this case, their power and authority may justly be rejected, as tyrannical in its exercise, by the subjects of Christ's spiritual kingdom. And that this is the state of matters with respect to this national church, as she is represented in her present judicatories, is what I am now to evince; and I hope the short account that is given above of our Presbyterian principles will not be judged foreign to the purpose in hand, especially when they are so much opposed even by some who not many years ago distinguished themselves by a zealous appearance for them; whereby some are in danger to be carried away unto the Sectarian extremes on the one hand, and on the other hand many are losing sight of our Presbyterian principles, by reason of the conduct of the judicatories, who, tho' they bear the name and character of Presbyterian courts, yet, in the present exercise and administration of the government and discipline, do in their judicative capacity oppose themselves unto our Presbyterian form and order, and walk contrary unto the special end and design of the ordinances of government and discipline in the house of God, as may evidently appear from the following particular instances.

1st, That the present judicatories of this church are tyrannical in the administration, may appear from their conduct in the settlement of ministers in vacant congregations. There has been for about twenty years by-past, and upwards, a continued series and tract of violent settlements, whereby ministers have been intruded upon dissenting and reclaiming congregations.

congregations: As these violent settlements have been countenanced and supported by the authority of the supreme judicatory of this national church, so they have taken place many of them upon the footing of presentations in consequence of the act restoring patronages, and others upon the footing of the act past by the assembly 1732 anent the settlement of vacant congregations. It is plain that a legislative power and authority was exercised over the house of God in the passing of the foresaid act, whereby the flock and heritage of God were spoiled and robbed of the power of choosing and calling their own ministers; and this power was given up to heritors under the general denomination of Protestants, by which means such as declare themselves opposite unto our Presbyterian constitution were invested with the power of giving ministers to Presbyterian churches. The foresaid act was indeed repealed by the assembly 1734; But, how was it repealed? Was it declared to be sinful or contrary unto our Presbyterian principles and constitutions, as they are asserted in our books of discipline, or other laudable acts of this national church? Or, was the above act declared to be a violation of the rights and privileges of the subjects of the King of Zion? No, by no means; it was only repealed, because it was past contrary to some forms appointed to be observed in the passing of acts of assembly: And therefore the settlement of ministers is to this very day carried on, either upon the footing of presentations, or after the manner prescribed in the repealed act; and consequently the judicatories of this church, not only justify that act in their practice, but, by their habitual procedure in the settlement of ministers, counteract the ordinances and institutions of Christ, and exercise a lordly dominion over the heritage of God, whereby they are wounded, scattered and broken; and this is done notwithstanding of manifold representations and remonstrances to the contrary.

The author of the Essay owns, that the charge of violent intrusions is, what the church of Scotland can least be vindicated from, p. 30. he likewise acknowledges that we have just ground to lament the many violent settlements that have taken place: "But, says he, as there hath been a considerable struggle made by many ministers of this church against them, a considerable stop hath been put to them for some time by-gone." It is true, that both ministers and many

other church-members have made a considerable struggle against them, as may appear from the narrative I have given in the introduction; but then such as are strangers to affairs amongst us in Scotland, and who read the above words of our author, may readily apprehend, that the struggles he mentions have had such desirable success, that the present judicatories are repenting and reforming that course of violence which they have practised against the Lord's heritage and flock in Scotland: But I appeal to our author himself, if he can honestly say, that the judicatories are either repenting or reforming their violence. Whether our author's words may be reckoned an extenuating of the sin of the judicatories, or whether or not, as they are laid, they have an evident tendency to impose upon the world, I leave it to the reader, who knows the state of matters with us in Scotland, to judge for himself: Only I may ask our author, Can he give me an instance in any of the general assemblies for several years by-gone, wherein violent settlements one or more have not been either countenanced, supported, or expressly enacted? Before I have done, I shall give him particular instances to the contrary. Here I shall only observe, that the assembly 1734, whose conduct and management was much better than that of several assemblies before, or of any that have followed, yet when the case of the parish of Cambusnethan was brought before them by an appeal from a sentence of the presbytery of Hamilton, which had an evident tendency towards a violent settlement in the said parish, even the forslaid assembly remit to the presbytery of Hamilton to proceed towards the settlement of the said parish as they shall judge best for the edification of that congregation: This was a delivering-up of the oppressed into their hands who had given sentence against them; for, who could doubt but that presbytery would think it necessary to see to the execution of their own sentence? I should not have upbraided that assembly with this particular instance, if the judicatories had been indeed reforming their violent measures; but the following assemblies one after another countenanced or supported, as I have said, the settlement of ministers over dissenting and reclaiming congregations, tho' the author of the Essay would have the world believe that a considerable stop has been put to such sinful practices for some time by-past.

That the settlement of ministers over dissenting and reclaiming

claiming congregations is tyranny, I need only appeal to the
 reverend Mr. Currie in his *Jus Pop. Div.* Pref. p. 4. where
 he gives it as a reformation-principle from Calvin and Calder-
 wood, which he himself adopts, "That it is an impious rob-
 bing of the church, rapine and sacrilege, to settle any mi-
 nister whether the people consent or not." If our author
 continues to own this, which he calls a reformation-principle,
 will be no difficult matter to prove against him, that the
 present judicatories are guilty of tyranny, yea, of habitual
 tyranny in the administration. It is affirmed in the Essay, p.
 9. "That he is not a tyrant who is guilty of a few acts of
 oppression, but he who is habitually guilty of them in his
 administration." He adds, "I think none will say the
 church of Scotland is habitually guilty of tyranny, and in-
 tolerable persecution whether of soul or body." Can our
 author have the confidence to say, that the present judicato-
 ries are only guilty of a few acts of what he calls impious rob-
 bery, sacrilege and rapine? I would gladly know what our
 author reckons necessary to determine habitual guilt: Can he
 refuse that a series and tract of intrusions for a great number
 of years by-past, and these persisted in by the judicatories,
 notwithstanding of petitions, representations and remonstran-
 ces against them: Can he refuse, I say, that these are suffici-
 ent to denominate them habitually guilty of acts of oppressi-
 on; or, according to our author, of *impious robbery, sacri-
 lege and rapine in the administration*? He speaks of intolera-
 ble persecution of soul and body: Is not *impious robbing* of
 men of what belongs to them as they are Christians, a consi-
 derable height of soul persecution? I know not what he means
 by *intolerable persecution*; for the faith and patience of the
 saints has overcome the greatest tyranny and cruelty, Rev.
 vi. 11. and xiii. 10. And as to persecution of the body, it
 is no secret, but what is very well known thro' the land, that
 tenants have been frowned upon, and considerable severities
 have been threatned against them, if they should not give in
 to the man whom their heritors have thought fit to chuse for
 their minister: Can our author say that there is no persecu-
 tion of body in all this? And, do not the judicatories sup-
 port and encourage such persecution, when they take the he-
 ritor's man by the hand, and thrust him in upon a dissenting
 and reclaiming people? The Essay tells us, from Ruther-
 foord

foord*, "That a tyrant is he who habitually sins against the catholic good of the subjects, and state, and subverting law." But, is not that which our author reckons *impious robbery*, a subverting of the laws of the kingdom of Christ? Can our author, who has professed so much zeal for the right of the Christian people, refuse that the catholic good of the subjects of the Redeemer's kingdom is interested in the election of church-officers? It is reckoned an essential point in the constitution of any civil society, and what the catholic good of the society is concerned in, who shall chuse their magistrates or such like officers; and our reformed divines have reckoned it of as great importance and moment to the church who shall chuse her pastors and overseers. And here I find give him the words of a considerable divine, for whom our author doth sometimes express a very great regard, viz. Dr. Owen, in his *Enquiry into the Original &c.* p. 181. speaking of the things that are necessary fundamentals unto the order of the church, on the part of the ministry, says he, "That all the ministers or officers of the church be duly chosen by the church itself, and solemnly set apart in the church unto their office, according unto the rule and law of Christ; this is fundamental unto church-order, the root of it, from whence all other parts of it do spring; and it is that which is expressly provided for in the scripture: If there be neglect herein, and no other relation required between ministers, elders, rulers, bishops, and the church, but what is raised and created by ways and rules of men's appointment,—the law of Christ is violated, and the order of the church is disturbed in its foundation." And, our author is consistent with himself in his other writings. I do not see how he can refuse that the present judicatories in their settlement of ministers are guilty of habitually sinning against the catholic good of the subjects of Christ, and of subverting the laws of his spiritual kingdom; and if he continues to own that the intrusion of ministers is *impious robbery, sacrilege and rapine*, how comes he to give the right-hand of fellowship to such, by sitting in judicatories with them? Can we have a conjunction, of parts and members of the same one ecclesiastical body with impious robbers, and such as are guilty of sacrilege and rapine, and who refuse to repent and reform; and

at the same time say, We are not partakers of their sins? Ask our author again, Whether or not impious robbers, and such as are guilty of sacrilege, &c. deserve that the curses of the house of God should be inflicted upon them? And, if so, then, according to our author's declared principles * they ought to be separated from.

Secondly, A second instance that I give of tyranny in the administration, is the conduct of the present judicatories with respect to such as have endeavoured to testify doctrinally against the present course of defection. Tho' ministers of the gospel have it in commission *to teach all things whatsoever the Lord Jesus hath commanded*, tho' they are obliged under the highest peril to testify doctrinally against every public sin, *l. viii. 1. Ezek. xxxiii. 7, 8.* yet, as I have noticed in the introduction, when the reverend Mr. Erskine minister at Stirling did testify doctrinally from the word of God against some of our steps of defection, he is brought to the bar of the judicatories and the assembly 1733 appoint him to be rebuked at their bar, *for impugning acts of assembly and the proceedings of the judicatories*, in a sermon at the opening of the synod of Perth and Stirling: And what were these proceedings of the judicatories which he impugned? Even the above-mentioned and the like, *viz.* the imposing of ministers upon dissenting and reclaiming congregations.

Thirdly, A third instance of tyranny in the administration is the conduct of the present judicatories, in *thrusting out from ministerial communion with them some ministers* who have refused to submit to the above unjust act and sentence, where they judged their ministerial freedom was restrained, and so therefore protested for liberty to testify on all proper occasions against the course of defection carried on by the judicatories: This was done by the foresaid assembly 1733 in their act and sentence past against Mr. Erskine and three other ministers, as I have also narrated in the introduction. They were every one, in consequence of the foresaid act and sentence, first suspended from the exercise of their ministry, because they would not retract their above protestation; this was done by the commission of the foresaid assembly: And afterwards, at another meeting of the same commission, they were *declared to be no longer ministers of the established church*, because they refused to submit to the censure of suspension, and continued to refuse to retract their protestation.

* *Essay*, p. 35.

The author of the Essay does not pretend to justify the above sentence of the assembly 1733: He tells us, p. 28. "was and am sorry ever such a sentence was past, when these brethren were cast out from the communion of the church." I have no ground to question our author's genuinity, especially when he gave such a public and solemn evidence of what he affirms above, in a sermon preached in Tolbooth-church in Edinburgh that same year, on the fast before the celebration of the Lord's supper there, when speaking of the conduct of the judicatories towards the protesting ministers, he expressed himself in the following terms: "That, tho' they should suffer suspension, deposition, imprisonment, banishment, heading or hanging, I am convinced in my conscience they suffer for a good cause, and the Lord will own and honour them in it." I hope I shall be excused if I have for once reported a hearsay, a practice very frequent with our author, and for which I have elsewhere condemned him: I should not have done it, if I had not had good authority for it; and besides, I do not reckon it any way prejudicial unto our author's character. But I must be allowed to add, that I am also sorry, that, notwithstanding his large profession of zeal against the conduct of the judicatories, he has not found them guilty of tyranny in the administration, neither in this particular, nor in any other instance whatsoever; yea, he does what he can to extenuate the faults of the judicatories, and for this end he brings in our reformation period as more tyrannical by far in the administration, and acknowledges, nothing can be laid to the charge of the present judicatories, equal to these acts of tyranny which he thinks fit to condescend upon from the foresaid period: But this I am afterwards to consider in its proper place. Here I shall briefly notice a few things that our author offers for taking off the force of our argument as it is laid upon tyranny in the administration, in the particular instance now before me: He acknowledges, in the first place, That the act and deed of the synod of Perth and Sirling, restoring the seceding ministers to ministerial communion with this church, to their several charges, and to the exercise of all parts of the ministerial function therein, in consequence of the power and authority given the synod by the general assembly 1734, "was, if not a formal yet a material rescinding of the sentences pronounced against them," Essay, p. 165. In opposition to the

seceding ministers affirm, That the act and sentence past the assembly 1733 is never to this day either formally or materially rescinded; and they have given their reasons for it, in their paper intituled, *reasons by, &c. why they have acceded to the judicatories, &c.* The author of the Essay never so much as attempted to enter into the argument it is laid in that paper, nay, he has industriously shifted the same: As for instance, he tells us, p. 165. "Whereas in vindication of their not acceding, upon what was done by that assembly and the foresaid synod 1734, it is complained, *That assembly did not themselves judge of the legality of the sentences pronounced against the brethren as they ought, seeing the synod could not do this;*" and for this he cites reasons not acced. p. 23. I observed in my postscript to the letter mentioned above, that the author of the Essay perverts our words, and that as they are cited by him they are unintelligible, and that he appears to me not to have understood what he was attempting to answer. Upon this our author, in a paper he calls his Short Vindication, after some frivolous criticisms, such as "Whereas it is said, I pretend to give one of their reasons, &c. this I refuse; I only say, 'Tis complained that assembly did not, &c." Under whatever shape he may think fit to take up our words in the page from which he pretends to cite them, they are laid as a reason why the seceding ministers judged the act and sentence past against them was neither materially nor formally rescinded. But I say, After two such insignificant criticisms, and an alledgance against some words in our act and testimony, which I shall afterwards consider, he tells us, p. 8. Short Vind. "I gave what I took to be the substance of that complaint, tho' not precisely in their words, nor did I say they were their expressions." How comes he then to mark them with the ordinary marks of a citation, as if they had been our precise words? It had been more fair if he had told his reader, that he did not give our precise words, but what he took to be the substance of what he calls our complaint. He transcribes in the page last cited some sentences out of which he had gathered what he calls our complaint; but still they are unintelligible as he lays them, neither can they convey unto any that read his book a just view of the argument or reason why the seceding brethren judge the act and sentence past against them is neither formally nor materially repealed: And I doubt not

to affirm, that the reason as it is there laid is such, as neither he nor any other can give a satisfying answer unto. The preceding brethren justly observe *, That the assembly 1734, in their act anent them, give full power to the synod of Perth to take the case of the four brethren, as it then stood, under their consideration, and to proceed and do therein as they shall find most justifiable and expedient for restoring the peace and preserving the authority of this church, &c. " But with the " express direction, That the said synod shall not take upon " them to judge of the legality or formality of the former " proceedings of the church-judicatories in relation to this " fair, or either to approve or censure the same. The brethren justly argue, That, from the above express direction of the assembly to the synod of Perth and Stirling, it is plain, that the act of assembly 1733, and the proceedings of their commission thereupon, are nowise affected by the act of assembly 1734, either as to their legality or formality; that is, they are held and reputed to be formal and legal deeds by the said assembly, and the synod of Perth is bound up from disapproving or censuring them. And, when the assembly 1734 did neither disapprove nor condemn the foresaid proceedings against the brethren, it is plain the synod could not. And tho' the synod had disapproved and condemned them, when they are expressly discharged by the assembly so to do, yet the act of assembly 1733 must still be reckoned a deed of this church, neither materially nor formally rescinded to this day; for an inferior judicatory can never repeal an act and sentence past by a superior, while they continue in conjunction with and subordination to them. If it is then enquired, What are the powers given by the assembly 1734 to the synod of Perth? I answer, The synod of Perth are only impowered to relax the four brethren, upon some political considerations, from the sentences that were passed against them, viz. for preventing the " lamentable consequences that have followed and may yet follow upon their separation from the " church, and the judicatories thereof." And, in the meantime, the act and deed of the assembly 1733 against them is held and reputed to be legal and formal, and is nowise to be censured by the synod; and the synod have accordingly relaxed them from the sentences pronounced and execute against them, and this was all that was done, or could be done by the synod.

nod, in consequence of the powers committed to them. I
 may here likewise observe, that the last assembly 1738 give
 the sense that the present judicatories have of the act of as-
 sembly 1734, when they mention it in the preamble to their
 dissent against the seceding ministers, as an aggravating circum-
 stance of their continued secession, that this is done notwith-
 standing of the clemency shewed to some of them in the year
 1734. The seceding ministers have always pled for the repeal
 of the deed 1733 against them, not as an act of favour or pi-
 ty unto them, as straying brethren, who deserved such a sen-
 tence, but as an act of justice; and they have pled the repeal
 of the said deed, not merely as an act of justice to themselves,
 but as a piece of justice that should be done to injured truth,
 namely, that an act and sentence condemning a faithful doc-
 trinal testimony against steps of defection, and likewise con-
 demning a protestation against the unwarrantable exercise of
 the key of discipline, might not remain to future generations
 as a standing act and deed of this national church. When the
 author of the Essay cites some of our words, but yet never
 touches the above reason why we judge the act of assembly
 1733 was never yet repealed either materially or formally,
 the most favourable construction that I could put upon his
 conduct was, that he appeared to me not to have understood
 the argument. He seems to be offended at this, and insinua-
 tes in his Short Vindication, that it is a bringing into ques-
 tion his intellectuals: But if he took up the force of our rea-
 soning, and took no manner of notice of the same, which I
 have shown he has not, then he waved it industriously and
 with design, and thereby imposes upon his credulous reader,
 when he conceals the weight and strength of our reason from
 him; and this was what I was very loth to impute unto him.
 From what is above observed it is evident, that the act of
 assembly 1733 is a standing act and deed of this national
 church, never yet rescinded nor repealed; therefore I shall
 not weary the reader with tracing our author further in the
 answers he makes to the several citations, which after his own
 way he transcribes from our reasons of not-accession, in re-
 gard he never once touches the argument, as the reader may
 find, if he thinks it worth his while to compare with the fore-
 said reasons, the citations taken from them, Essay p. 168,
 pp. 170. If I should tell our author, that in some of these
 he has perverted our words as much as in the above citation
 which

which I have examined, or that he has concealed the force of our reasoning in every one of them, I expect no other answer from him, but that he has *given what he takes to be the substance of our complaint, tho' not precisely in our words*

It is like some may judge, that it is not of any great importance in the present question, whether the act of assembly 1733 against the four brethren was rescinded or not, when the execution of the sentence against them was diverted: But it will be found to be of considerable moment and importance, when it is observed, that, by the act and deed of the said assembly, a doctrinal testimony against the sinful proceedings of the judicatories is censured, and thereby faithful ministerial freedom against a course of defection, as also a protestation for exoneration against such a gross perverting of the key of discipline, are both condemned; by which procedure I humbly judge, that not only our principles as Presbyterians, but also as Protestants, are attacked, and a blind submission and subjection unto judicatories, even when walking contrary to our laudable acts and constitutions, is established: And as this is a piece of manifest tyranny in the administration, so it has a native tendency to subvert our constitution.

With respect to ministerial freedom in testifying doctrinally against the sinful proceedings of church judicatories, it is plainly condemned by the act of assembly 1733, appointing Mr. Erskine to be rebuked at their bar, for impugning, in his sermon, acts of assembly, and proceedings of church-judicatories: And, what were these acts or deeds of assembly and proceedings of the judicatories which he impugned? Only such as concerned the violent settlements of ministers in vacant congregations, in direct opposition to our received and known principles. But it is alledged, that the assembly 1734 have declared for ministerial freedom in the plainest terms, when, in their act relative to the same, "they do, for the satisfaction of all, hereby declare, " that due and regular ministerial freedom is still left entire to all ministers; and that the same was not, nor shall be held or understood to be, anywise impaired or restrained by the late assembly's decision in that particular process," viz. in the process against Mr. Erskine. Upon the above words of the assembly, the seceding brethren justly observe in their reasons of not acceding, p. 35. That they are conceived in very general terms.

That

hat they have not told us what they mean by due and regular ministerial freedom; and that it is plain, that, according to the act of assembly 1733, the doctrinal freedom used by Mr. Erskine, and the freedom which the four brethren used protesting for the faithful and free exercise of their ministry, was neither due nor regular ministerial freedom, in the plain sense and meaning of the foresaid act of assembly; and therefore they justly conclude, that the assembly 1734, instead of taking off the restraint that was laid upon ministerial freedom, do rather approve and vindicate the act and deed of assembly 1733, when they expressly declare, "That due and regular ministerial freedom was not anywise impaired or restrained by the decision of the said assembly in this particular process." But says the author of the Essay, This is not matter of fact (p. 171.) for it is a plain misrepresentation of the words of the general assembly 1734 upon this head; for that assembly never says, *Ministerial freedom was not anywise impaired by that act 1733.*" What then do they say? O says our author, they declare, for the satisfaction of all, that due and regular ministerial freedom is still left entire to all ministers; and that the same was not, nor shall be held or understood to be, anywise impaired or restrained by the late assembly's decision," &c. against Mr. Erskine and the other three ministers. Let the reader now judge for himself on whose side the plain misrepresentation on this head lies. It is but a very sorry evasion, when the author of the Essay adds, "As that assembly 1734 declares for ministerial freedom in the plainest terms; so, when they say, *Due and regular ministerial freedom was not held or understood* to be anywise impaired by that decision, that assembly might mean no more but only that they judged the assembly 1733 did not design to restrain due and regular ministerial freedom by that act; and so much the principal men concerned in framing thereof did declare." It seems our author was at an uncertainty about the meaning of the assembly, when he tells us they might mean no more; but, to relieve himself of this uncertainty, he has got out the secret design and meaning of the principal men, &c. And, after all, what is the great discovery that he has made? It is even this, that they did not, in framing the act 1733, design to restrain due and regular ministerial freedom by that act. And, who doubts that the

principal men would make this declaration? But, have they told our author what they reckoned due and regular ministerial freedom? Or rather, if he had enquired a little further into the meaning of the principal men, he might have found that Mr. Erskine's doctrinal freedom, and the freedom used by the four protesting ministers, was, in their reckoning, neither due nor regular ministerial freedom: Yea, our author, if he pleases, may see it with his own eyes from their act and sentence; for, if they had reckoned otherwise, they would never have passed such an act and sentence against the four ministers. From all that is above observed it is evident, that the present judicatories are tyrannical in their administration, in so far as they condemn doctrinal freedom against a course of defection, and have thrust out some ministers from communion with them, merely for protesting, for their own just and necessary exoneration, against an unjust sentence restraining ministerial freedom and faithfulness, whereby the key of discipline is perverted, and the ordinances of the King of Zion are changed, and the covenant of Levi is corrupted by the above conduct and administration of the present judicatories.

4thly, A fourth instance I give of tyranny in the administration is, That, by the acts and constitutions of the present judicatories, such of the Lord's people as live in parishes where ministers are intruded upon them, are required to submit to the ministry of such intruders; yea, they are upon the matter excommunicate from sealing ordinances, if they do not submit to their ministry. This is done by the act of assembly 1733 concerning some ministers in the Presbytery of Dunfermline, whereby the ministers of that Presbytery are inhibited and discharged to admit any of the parish of Kinross to sealing ordinances, without the consent of the intruder into that parish, under the pain of the highest censures. It is acknowledged by the author of the Essay, in vindication of the present judicatories, p. 34. "That the assembly 1735 allowed
 " some of these parishes, who had pastors thrust in upon
 " them, a liberty of church privileges wherever they might
 " have freedom to ask them: which, says he, was a material
 " rial testimony against intrusions." And, p. 173. he alleges, that the foresaid act is "materially rescinded, in regard
 " the assembly left it to the synod of Fife to do in the affair
 " of Kinross, as to the admitting that people to partake of
 " church privileges, as they should think fit; and, says he

the synod of Fife did, upon this, allow that people to have the benefit of church-privileges wherever they should think meet to ask them." But I have evinced in the postscript to the printed letter, that the assembly 1735 gave no such allowance in the terms reported by our author: I have likewise observed, that the same assembly did in like manner refer the case about the inrolment of the intruders in some of these parishes to the respective synods; and, in consequence of this permit, the synod of Perth and Stirling did actually inrol the intruder into the parish of Muckhart. Hence, even according to our author's way of reasoning, that assembly was so far from giving a material testimony against intrusions; that they have both materially and formally countenanced them, by allowing synods to inrol intruders. But I refer to what I more fully said upon this head in the foresaid postscript, where I have made it evident, that the act of assembly assenting to the ministers of Dunfermline presbytery is still a standing act and deed of this church; and it may be afterwards evidenced, that the key of discipline is thereby perverted, and that there is a considerable piece of tyranny in the present administration.

Lastly, The last instance I give of the tyrannical procedure of the present judicatories is, the contempt that they have cast upon the petitions and representations of ministers, elders, and other church-members, when they have come to their bar, spreading out their grievances before them; I have given particular instances of this already in the introduction, where I have made it evident from the words of the protestation signed by the reverend Mr. Currie and other worthy brethren, that the conduct of the assembly 1732 in this matter was a piece of the greatest tyranny; and therefore I shall not further insist upon it in this place.

Upon the whole, If the several particulars above adduced are seriously considered, it will be found, that the present judicatories of this national church are guilty of an habitual tract and series of tyranny in the administration: Particularly, they are highly guilty of a habitual tract of violence and oppression upon the heritage of God, by the intrusion of ministers upon them; as also, they are guilty of screening the erroneous, in dismissing them from their bar without any censure at all, or without such a censure as is proportioned to the scandal and offence they have given; and at the same

time they have turned the edge of discipline against such endeavour a faithful and conscientious discharge of their duty, either by thrusting them out from ministerial communion with them, who have endeavoured doctrinally or judicially to testify against a course of defection; or by thrusting such out from Christian communion, who refuse to submit to the ministry of intruders: They are likewise guilty of suffering such acts, deeds and constitutions, whereby the use of discipline is perverted, to remain among the standing acts and deeds of this national church; yea, they are guilty of neglecting and despising the humble petitions and representations, and the just remonstrances of ministers and other church members against their unwarrantable proceedings: In all which instances, the laws and ordinances of the great Master of the house are counteracted, our Presbyterian form and model of government is undermined, and the bond of ecclesiastical unity, in so far as it concerns the government and discipline of the house of God, is broken and dissolved. And the said sin of tyranny in the administration is yet more highly aggravated when it is considered, that the present judgements justify themselves in what they have done, and refuse to acknowledge their iniquity; yea, they persist in the same course and practice, particularly in the imposing of ministers upon dissenting and reclaiming congregations, notwithstanding of the many dismal effects that this has produced, even the wounding, breaking and scattering the Lord's flock and heritage thro' the land.

S E C T. III.

Concerning the Administration of Gospel-ordinances by such as are imposed upon dissenting and reclaiming Congregations.

I Have already observed, that the characters and marks of a true church, as they are laid in the 18th article of our first Confession of Faith, are such as give us a description of a pure church as well as a true church. A perfect church is not indeed to be expected in this militant state; the pure churches that ever were, may be compared to the moon which in her brightest appearances has always discernible spots: Yet a particular visible church may, thro' the gra-

of the Lord Jesus, attain such a measure of conformity in her doctrine, order and government unto the pattern shown in the mount, that she may very well be denominate a pure church; and such a church is held forth unto us in the above-mentioned article of our Confession. As purity of doctrine is the first, so the second note or character there given of a true church is, "The right administration of the sacraments of Christ Jesus, which must be annexed unto the word and promise of God, to seal and confirm the same in our hearts." Our reforming fathers do also inform us, in the 22d. article of the same Confession, what they judge requisite unto the right ministration of the sacraments; That sacraments be rightly ministred, we judge two things are requisite: The one, That they be ministred by lawful ministers, whom we affirm to be only they that are appointed to the preaching of the word, into whose mouth God hath put some sermon of exhortation, they being men lawfully chosen thereto by some church: The other, That they be ministrate in such elements, and in such sort, as God hath appointed; else we affirm, that they cease to be the right sacraments of Christ Jesus." And what they mean by men *lawfully chosen* to the work of the ministry, we may learn from the first Book of Discipline, Head IV. where they tell us, "That ordinary vocation (*viz.* to the ministry) consisteth in election, examination and admission." And concerning election they say, "It appertaineth to the people, and to every severall congregation, to elect their minister." Compared with Head XX. of the said book, where they affirm, "That the Spirit of God inwardly first moving the hearts to seek Christ's glory and the profit of his kirk, and thereafter the nomination of the people, the examination of the learned, and public admission (as before is said) make men lawful ministers of the word and sacraments: We speak of an ordinary vocation, &c." From the above words in the foresaid article of our Confession, I observed, in my postscript to the letter on secession, "That Mr. Currie cannot refuse that there are many who have been intruded into the holy ministry, being men that were never lawfully chosen thereto by any church; and, according to the foresaid Confession, they are not lawful ministers, neither are the sacraments dispensed by them right ministrate; yea, according to the said Confession, they are not right sacra-

"ments of Christ Jesus." As also, "That Mr. Currie
 "not refuse that the present judicatories support, pro
 "and countenance such men, in the exercise of their
 "stry, and in the dispensation of the sacraments, whom
 "Confession declares to be no lawful ministers of Christ.
 I add, That it may be surprizing, that when Mr. Currie
 Essay, p. 3. speaks of the second note of a true church,
 should without the least limitation or restriction affirm,
 "think none can object against this, that the seals of God's
 "covenant are as purely administered in this church as
 "they were in any." Having made the above short obser-
 in my postscript to the printed letter, p. 39, 40. the reverend
 Mr. Currie in his Short Vindication, p. 5. reflects upon the
 in the following manner; "I must tell our brother, It is
 "unaccountable imposing upon the world, to say, Our
 "Confession of Faith denies that the sacraments can be right-
 "ly administered by such as have been intruded upon Chris-
 "tian congregations; or to say, The sacraments are not right-
 "sacraments of Jesus Christ, which are administered by such
 "men." He adds, "This doctrine is enough to beget pe-
 "plexing scruples in the consciences of poor serious people,
 "so as to question whether or not ever they have been bap-
 "tized." He compares it to Dodwell's wild doctrine, of the
 absolute necessity of Episcopal baptism; and he fears not to
 say, It is opposite to the doctrine of all the Protestant churches.
 Mr. Currie seems to have been in a more than ordinary
 ferment when he writes at this rate: I persuade myself, that
 when he is in calm blood, he will not justify himself in the
 above confident assertions, that have more of banter than
 argument or reason. As to that of an *unaccountable imposition*
upon the world, I shall briefly notice what Mr. Currie has
 advanced to deliver the world from this great imposition upon
 them; and, in order to this, he affirms, that I labour under
 mistake; For the above Confession (says he) "makes
 "two things requisite to the right administration of sacra-
 "ment: The first is, That men be lawfully chosen to the
 "work of the gospel by some church or judicatory thereof
 "for by church a Presbytery, or ministers the church
 "representative. who, according to the constant doctrine
 "this church, are only clothed with authority to ordain
 "to the work of the gospel, is meant." But here Mr. Currie
 makes an addition to the Confession of Faith: Where

Confession, in giving the characters of lawful ministers, makes this one, *they being men lawfully chosen to the work of ministry by some church*: Mr. Currie thinks fit to add, or *indicatives thereof*; but the Confession has no such thing. And whereas Mr. Currie affirms, that by *church* is there meant *presbytery, or ministers the church representative*; I must tell him, that the word *church* is nowhere taken in this sense in the said Confession: And besides, the word *church*, in the place cited, cannot be taken in Mr. Currie's sense; because the Confession speaks of *Election*, and not of the *Ordination* of ministers: To *choose*, and to *ordain*, are quite different things, and they have as different meanings as they have different letters, syllables and sounds. I have made it evident from the words of the Book of Discipline above-cited, what our reformers mean by *lawfully chosen* to the ministry; and Mr. Currie knew some time ago very well how to distinguish between *choosing* and *ordaining*, when he tells us in his *Jus Pop. Div.* p. 131, 132. that *election* belongs to the people, and *ordination* to the presbytery. If the Confession had said they must be *lawfully ordained by some church*, his reasoning had been good sense. I must also here observe, that according to our author's *Jus Div.* chap. 4. it is a Protestant principle, asserted at the reformation, That it belongs to the people to choose their own ministers: And it is this very principle that is asserted in the above passage of the Confession; and it is the very same with that which is asserted in the IV. Head of the first Book of Discipline, which, Mr. Currie, in his *Jus Pop. Div.* p. 81. tells us, treats of ministers, and their lawful election. I shall only add, that when Mr. Currie, by the church choosing a minister, understands a Presbytery; he is now in so far agreed with the *humble and modest enquirer*: and I doubt not but this author and his followers will judge it their duty to make their compliments unto him for this liberal concession that he has made them.

Mr. Currie alledges, as above, That what I have inferred from our first Confession of Faith, "is enough to beget perplexing scruples in the consciences of poor serious people, so as to question whether or not ever they have been baptized." To which I answer, That he himself has given full ground and occasion for such perplexing scruples, by confounding two questions that are quite distinct, namely, that about the right ministration of the sacraments, and the other

about their validity. Our Confession, in the above-cited article, asserts, " We flee the doctrine of the Papistical church in participation of their sacraments; *First*, Because their ministers are no ministers of Christ Jesus. *Secondly*, Because they have so adulterated, both the one sacrament, and the other, with their own inventions, that no part of Christ's action abides in the original purity." Yet every body knows, that the compilers of our Confession, and our reformers, never re-baptized any that were baptized in the church of Rome, and that because she professed the doctrine of the holy Trinity, and because baptism is administered by her ministers in that adorable name; as also, because she holds other essential articles of Christianity, such as the Deity of the Son and Holy Ghost, the incarnation of the Son, the unity of his person, and the true and real distinction of his nature, are held in that church by outward visible profession, conformable to the decisions of the first four general councils, against such as stated themselves adversaries unto these important points of our Christian faith: For these and the like weighty reasons, our reformers acknowledge the validity of the sacrament of baptism, tho' dispensed in the Popish church; and yet, at the same time, all the reformed churches agree with our Confession of Faith, that the sacraments had not that rectitude and purity which is required according to the divine institution, when administered in the church of Rome; not only because they are adulterate in the said church by a corrupt mixture of their own inventions, but also because the Popish ministers are not ministers of Jesus Christ. In like manner, all Presbyterian dissenters from the church of England do justly maintain, that the sacraments are not rightly administered in that church, for reason of the additions of men unto the divine institution; yet at the same time they acknowledge their validity, and never plead for the re-baptizing of any that were baptized in the church of England. Also in the late times of Prelacy, when the Prelatic incumbents administered the sacraments in the same manner as we do, without the superstitious additions either of the Popish or English church; yet the Presbyterian church of Scotland refused to receive gospel ordinances from them, for this reason, amongst others, Because they would not look upon the bishop's underlings to be lawful ministers of Jesus Christ; yet they never made a question about the validity of ordinances dispensed by them. From which

have observed, I hope it is plain, that the question about right or pure administration of the sacraments is quite distinct from the other, about their validity; and I cannot conceive how it entered into Mr. Currie's head, or what good and purpose he intended to promote thereby, when he drew up Dodwell's scheme in the present dispute. The doctrine advanced by himself, Essay, p. 63. is more like un-Dodwell's wild doctrine than any thing I have advanced: it is true that secession from a church is, according to our author, a condemning of the Lord Jesus if he keeps communion with any of her members; then, if our author owns that secession from the church of England is warrantable and necessary, he must condemn the Head of the church, if he communicate himself and his saving grace to any who live and are members of that corrupt church: But our author may find this doctrine justly exploded by the orthodox; and, to use his own words, "I fear not to say, 'tis a doctrine which is opposite to the doctrine of all the Protestant churches."

From what I have said, 'tis plain, that, according to the doctrine delivered in our first Confession of Faith, two things are requisite in order to the right administration of the sacraments according to the divine institution: *First*, That they be administered by lawful ministers; and one of the characters given us of lawful ministers is, their being lawfully chosen to the ministry by some church. The *second* requisite is, that they be administered in such elements, and in such sort as God hath appointed: Hence I justly conclude, that such as are intruded upon the church, or imposed upon Christian congregations without their call and consent, as they run un-der the work of the Lord unsent, so they are not lawful ministers of Christ; and consequently, that the administration of gospel ordinances by such intruders wants that purity and sanctitude which the divine institution requires. Our author in his Short Vindication, p. 6. proposes the following question, "Such men as going to the plantations are ordained, could they not rightly administer the sacraments, tho' as yet they have not been chosen by any particular church?" To which I answer, If they are not chosen by any particular church, yet neither are such men intruded upon any particular church; and this does very much alter the case. But further, extraordinary cases, such as the above case supposed is, fall

fall not under the present question: Our author knew some time ago how to distinguish betwixt ordinary and extraordinary cases; for he tells us, in his *Jus Pop. Div.* p. 16. "That such is the people's interest in the election of the pastors, that their bare election is enough to make one minister of Christ, where ordination cannot be had according to his institution." Yet he very well knows, that, according to the sentiments of Presbyterian divines, the bare election of the people in ordinary cases will not constitute a lawful minister of Christ without ordination. In like manner, tho', in some extraordinary cases, indefinite ordination (as they term it) may be necessary and sufficient to denote one a lawful minister of Christ; yet in ordinary cases when one is appointed a minister unto a particular congregation, ordination without lawful election does not constitute him a lawful minister of Christ. And if it is true, as Mr. Currie affirms in his preface to the fore said book p. 4. "is an impious robbing of the church, rapine and sacrilege" "to settle any minister whether the people call and consent or not:" How can the church be obliged to receive and acknowledge such as her lawful pastors, who are impious robbers, and who are guilty of rapine and sacrilege? Upon the whole, it is evident, that the present question is not about the validity of the sacraments dispensed by intruders, but Whether or not such should be held and reputed as lawful and sent ministers of Christ, who have not been chosen by the church whatsoever, but who are imposed upon the church while dissenting and reclaiming? And, if such are not to be held and reputed as lawful and sent ministers of Christ, whether or not the administration of gospel ordinances by such has that purity and rectitude which the divine institution requires? And I humbly judge, that the above-cited article of our first Confession of Faith decides both the questions in the manner I have already observed in my postscript: And therefore, when men are intruded upon the church by the presbyterial judicatories, and also countenanced and supported by their ministerial administrations, our author might have said, or at least he ought to have qualified, his confident boldness, *Essay*, p. 3. "I think none can object against this, that the seals of God's covenant are as purely administered in the church as ever they were in any."

Our author, in his *Short Vindication*, p. 6. puts another question

ession unto me, which I shall not decline to answer;
 Will our brother (says he) deny that the sacraments could
 be rightly administrate by the great Mr. Henderson when
 in Leuchars, albeit he was thrust in upon them at first?"
 To which I answer, There was a vast difference betwixt Lu-
 ther a poor blind friar (as he speaks concerning himself) and
 the same Luther when enlightned in the knowlege of the
 truth: In the former case, he was neither a lawful nor sent
 minister of Christ according to our confession; yet, for the
 reasons I have given, the sacraments dispensed by him were
 valid. In like manner, there was a great difference betwixt
 Mr. Henderson the prelatie incumbent and intruder in the pa-
 rish of Leuchars, and the same Mr. Henderson when conver-
 ted by the ministry of the famous Mr. Robert Bruce: In the
 former case, according to our said confession, he was not a
 lawful minister of Christ; yet, for the same reasons, the sa-
 craments dispensed by him were valid. The Essay observes,
 3. from the fulfilling of the scriptures, That Mr. Hender-
 son having gone out of curiosity to hear Mr. Bruce preach,
 the words he first uttered from the pulpit were, *He that com-
 eth not in by the door, but climbeth up any other way, the
 same is a thief and a robber.* These words were very close to
 the case of Mr. Henderson the intruder, and, as the Essay
 tells us, "did, by the Lord's blessing, at the very present
 take him by the heart, and had so great an impression on
 him, that they were the mean of his conversion." If the
 present intruders in the church of Scotland would give the
 same evidences of their sincere repentance and conversion
 which the great Mr. Henderson gave, I doubt not but all the
 Lord's people thro' the land would cheerfully embrace them
 as lawful ministers of Christ; and, if the present judicatories
 of the church would give the like evidences of their repent-
 ance for the violence they have done to the heritage of God,
 and their other steps of defection from our reformation prin-
 ciples, our secession from them would soon be at an end:
 but it is to be regreted, that the quite contrary practice is
 pursued; the judicatories justify themselves in their sinful
 proceedings, and intruders hold themselves as lawful and
 sent ministers of Christ: The Lord may justly say of us, as he
 speaks of Judah by the prophet Jer. viii. 6. *I hearkned and
 heard, but they spake not aright; no man repented him of his
 wickedness, saying, What have I done?*

I have

I have not declined to make answer to such questions. The author of the Essay in his Short Vindication has thought fit to propose upon this head unto me; and therefore I expect that he will not refuse to give me an answer to the following: The first is, Whether or not such as are intruded into the office of the ministry, or who are appointed ministers over dissenting and reclaiming congregations, should be received and acknowledged by the church as lawful and sent ministers of Christ, while they justify their intrusions, and show no evidence of sincere repentance for the same? The second question that I propose is, Whether or not gospel-ordinances be dispensed by such as are neither lawful nor sent ministers of Christ, have that rectitude or purity in their administration which the divine institution requires? As I have given my judgment plainly upon both these questions, and I hope according to the genuine sense and meaning of the above-mentioned articles of our Confession of Faith; so I wish our author would give a plain and direct answer unto them, without amuse his reader with Dodwell's wild doctrine, and an extraneous question about the validity of baptism. I shall conclude this section with a citation from a judicious divine, for whom our author professeth a very great regard, and which I think applicable to the case now before us, viz. Mr. Durham of Revelation, in his digression upon reading and hearing; "matter of hearing (says he) it is not so hard to discern
 "are to be accounted to speak without God's commission
 "because ordinarily such have either no warrantable call
 " (no, not in the outward form, and so cannot be accounted
 " but to run unsent) or, by palpable defection from the
 " and commission given them in that call, they have forfeit
 " ed their commission, and so no more are to be accounted
 " ambassadors to Christ, or watchmen of his flock, though
 " watchman of the city is to be accounted an observer thereof
 " of, when he hath publicly made defection to the enemy
 " and taken on with him."

S E C T IV.

rein it is shewn, that, by some Acts and Deeds of the present Judicatories, sinful and unwarrantable Terms of Communion are imposed upon the Members of this Church.

THE author of the Essay grants, p. 36. that, when the least sinful term of communion is imposed upon church-members, it is a just ground of separation from that church: the associate presbytery have affirmed in their act and testimony, That by some standing acts and deeds of this national church, as she is represented in her present judicatories, several unwarrantable terms of communion are imposed upon ministers and other members of the church. Tho' I judge I have evinced in the preceeding sections, that the present judicatories, in their management with respect to the doctrine, government and discipline, have broke the bonds of our ecclesiastical unity; as also, that they have forfeit their claim to the characters given us in the 18th article of our constitution of a true church, that is, of a church which has attained such a measure of purity, that we may safely join ourselves unto her as members of the same ecclesiastical body; and from what is already observed, it may clearly appear that secession from the present judicatories is lawful and warrantable; yet I shall briefly notice what these sinful and unwarrantable terms of communion are, which the presbytery have imposed upon the members of this church; and I shall also consider what the author of the Essay has advanced, to take off the force of the argument for secession, as it is grounded upon sinful terms of communion.

The associate presbytery in their judicial act and testimony, p. 85. observe, That, by the act of assembly 1733, against Mr. Erskine and the other protesting ministers, two sinful terms of communion were imposed; *First*, "That no minister of this church should testify from the pulpit against the acts of assembly and proceedings of church judicatories, even tho' they were such as had a direct tendency to undermine our constitution. *Secondly*, That no minister or member of this church should protest, for their own exoneration against acts, sentences or decisions of the supreme

"preme

" preme judicatory, even though they should nearly
 " the public cause of God, and restrain ministerial free-
 " and faithfulness in testifying against the sins and defects
 " of a backsliding church." The presbytery do justly
 conclude, that the sentence of rebuke and admonition past against
 Mr. Erskine, on account of his doctrinal freedom in testifying
 against the sinful proceedings of the judicatories, was an act
 and deed of the supreme judicatory, making all the ministers
 of this church liable to censure, if they should testify doctrinally
 against the same or the like proceedings of the judicatories:
 As also, they judge 'tis plain, that the severe sentence
 passed against the four protesting ministers, on account of
 their protestation, was an act and deed of the supreme
 judicatory, finding and declaring any minister or member of
 church obnoxious to censure, if they should protest for their
 own exoneration against sinful acts, sentences or decisions of
 the supreme judicatory, restraining ministerial freedom and
 faithfulness.

The presbytery likewise judge, that by the act and sentence
 of the assembly 1733, discharging the ministers of the
 bytery of Dunfermline, under pain of the highest censure,
 to admit any of the parish of Kinross to sealing ordinances
 without permission of the intruded incumbent, two other
 unseemly terms of communion are imposed; the *first* whereof
 is, That, by the foresaid act, ministers are bound up from
 dispensing sealing ordinances to such of the Lord's people
 who have not freedom to submit to the ministry of intruders,
 under pain of the highest censure. And, *secondly*, By the
 same act, all the Lord's people thro' the land are required
 to submit to intruders as their lawful pastors, or otherwise
 they are excommunicate from sealing ordinances. The plain
 import and meaning of the foresaid act is, That people must
 either submit to the ministry of intruded incumbents, or
 forego the sealing ordinances of the gospel; and if any minister
 venture to dispense them unto them, except in the
 terms prescribed in the act, *viz.* the permission of the
 intruded incumbent, he must do it at his peril, the highest
 censures of the church are denounced against him: This looks
 like the tyrannical *anathemas* pronounced by the council
 of Trent against all the Protestant churches who would not
 submit to their no less tyrannical decisions.

The author of the Essay grants, p. 36. That it is a sinful
 of communion, "if a church require of us to condemn
 any thing in our former practice which is just and lawful;"
 So "if they require us to condemn any thing in the
 practice of others which is right and equitable." And he
 not refus that submission to a sentence of rebuke for the
 charge of one's duty, and the retracting of a protestation
 exoneration, which was demanded of Mr. Erskine and
 other protesting ministers, was a requiring them to con-
 n a thing in their own practice, which they judged upon
 d grounds to be just and lawful; neither can it be rea-
 bly refused, that when ministers are convinced in their
 minds that it is the duty of people to withdraw from
 d incumbents, if notwithstanding of this they are dis-
 gged, under the pain of the highest censures of the church,
 dispense sealing ordinances to people who live under the
 istry of such, then they are expressly required to condemn
 ing in the *practice of others which they judge right and e-*
able: Yea, further, if people are by an ecclesiastical act
 sentence shut up under the ministry of intruders, they are
 eby obliged, yea, they are forced as far as an ecclesiastic
 on can do it, to own and acknowledge such for their lawful
 sent ministers, whom they are persuaded have run unsent.
 Tho' our author does not pretend to justify any of the a-
 e acts, yet he attempts to take off the force of the argu-
 at for secession, as it is stated upon sinful terms of com-
 munion, in some exceptions that he has laid against it. His
 f and leading one is, That the above acts of assembly 1733
 materially rescinded viz. the act against the protesting
 ists, by the act of assembly 1734 with reference to the
 ministers; and the act against the people of Kinross, our
 nor reckons, is materially rescinded by the assembly 1735.
 Who (he says) allowed the synod of Fife to do in that af-
 air as they saw meet, or should find most for edification."
 ere is no such extensive remit of this affair made to the sy-
 of Fife as our author gives out: The words, *as they*
meet, are added by our author; they are not to be found
 the remit as it lyes in the index of the unprinted acts. But
 all not insist further upon this, having in a former secti-
 discovered the weakness of this evasion, where I have
 savoured to prove, that there is no subsequent act and
 deed

deed of any assembly since the 1733, whereby the acts and deeds of that assembly are repealed either materially or formally; and consequently they are yet standing acts and deeds of the present judicatories of this national church, whatever connivance there may be in the mean time at the practice of dispensing sealing ordinances to such as are under the ministry of intruders; and I doubt not but the leading men concerned in framing the acts that our author mentions, whereby he acknowledges the acts of assembly 1733 are repealed, will acknowledge so much when they find a proper opportunity for doing so, whatever flattering compliments they thought fit to make unto the author of the Essay, at the meeting of the last assembly, for the good service he had done them. We have one instance of their making such acknowledgements in the act and sentence past against the seceding ministers at the said assembly, when, in the preamble to their act, the act of assembly 1734 anent them is declared to be only an act of clemency towards them.

If the former exception is not sufficient to weaken the argument, the author of the Essay has yet another; "The sentences, says he, were not sinful terms of communion to all the ministers of this church; for they respected the four brethren alienarly." And, p. 182. "That act (*viz.* the act 1733) respected only the four brethren." And in the same page, speaking of the act of assembly concerning the people of Kinross, says he, "As it was only an act in a particular case, and an act which only concerned the presbytery of Dunfermline and parish of Kinross, so it was a term of communion to other ministers and parishes." But can it be presumed that a national assembly should prescribe terms of communion to one part of the ecclesiastical body which do not equally, and for the same very reasons, extend to the whole, both ministers and other church-members, according to their different situation and circumstances. Our author's reasoning, both on this and other heads, may well deserve the censure that he thinks fit to pass upon my renowned brother Mr. Mair's expressions, Essay, p. 117. but I shall be far from making use of such expressions; I may have occasion to notice them in their proper place. I doubt not but I may say, That it may lie open to an ordinary capacity, who take notice of his reasonings upon this head, to observe

force or weight there is in them, however fair and sensible they may appear to his credulous and inadvertent ear. I shall only further add, When the general assembly censured one minister for a faithful doctrinal testimony, not a public declaration of the church represented in her annual assembly, that every other minister who uses the same faithfulness and freedom must in like manner be censured.

Or, is not the above deed a judicial condemning of all freedom and faithfulness? Again, when four ministers sentenced to censure on account of a protestation for excommunication against the fore said deed, is not this a judicial condemning of all protestations of this kind? Or, is it not a public standing declaration what any minister or member of this church ought to expect if they presume to protest after this manner against a deed of a general assembly? Likewise, when the people of Kinross are actually excommunicate from seal-ordinances, does not this deed of assembly affect all those who are in the like situation and circumstances with them? Our author affirm, that when the judicatories thought the procedure just and reasonable with respect to Mr. Erskine and his brethren, and with respect to the presbytery of Edinburgh, that yet they would certainly judge the like procedure with other ministers and presbyteries unjust and unreasonable? Or, will he refuse that the judicatories by the above decisions have laid down precedents for all similar cases? And, can he deny that the decisions in the above cases recorded among the printed acts of assembly, which are acknowledged by the church to be of public use? If the author of the Essay shall duly consider these things, I am persuaded he will find that the evasion he makes use of here, That the above-mentioned acts *are only acts in particular cases*, has nothing in it but an empty sound, however it may amuse and intangle his inadvertent reader. I find nothing else from our author that deserves any notice on this subject, except his ordinary retreat to the assembly 1638, and the proceedings of that period, which, as I have already said, shall be afterwards considered.

Our author grants that the imposing the least sinful condition of communion upon us is just ground of separation from a church, so, amongst the sinful terms of communion required by a church, the last which our author mentions, p. 37. is, "If they should require us to engage

“ for the future to abstain from what is seasonable duty, “ required of us in our station.” And here I agree with the author, providing he does not confine the engagement he speaks of to an express formal promise. I humbly judge that it is a sinful term of communion, when conjunction with the judicatories of a church does in its own nature involve ministers in the omission of such duties as their office and station does oblige them to, and which the providence of their day and the circumstances of the church require of them: Or, the conjunction mentioned is sinful, when it strains the office-bearers of the church from the discharge of any of the duties of their office. And, if this is the case with us at present, then a secession from the present judicatories is necessary and warrantable, in regard we cannot continue in conjunction with them, without abstaining from what is seasonable duty, and what both our station and circumstances of the church require from us; and consequently the union with the present judicatories, that is pleaded, must be under such terms as are sinful and unlawful: that this is the case at present, may appear from the two following instances I give.

1st, A judicial testimony for truth, when opposed or controverted, is a debt that the office-bearers of the church owe both to present and succeeding generations: But the present judicatories of this national church refuse to assert the truth of Christ, in opposition to the errors that have been venerated in our day; they refuse to condemn several errors, by which many important truths, held forth from the word of God in our Confession of Faith, are opposed and assaulted: then shall the duty we owe to the Head of the church be discharged? If the minor part, who are sensible of this duty, continue in conjunction with the judicatories, cannot lift up a judicial testimony for truth; they cannot perform any judicial act or deed condemn the particular errors that are vended, or testify particularly against former and present sins: The majority bear the keys of government and discipline, and the minority cannot exercise them while they remain in conjunction with them; and therefore, since ordinary means have been used with the present judicatories to engage them to their duty, but without any success, the minority, tho’ few in number, who are sensible of their

ight to make a secession from them, and associate together, at they may endeavour to discharge that duty which their office and the present circumstances of the church, threatened with an inundation of pernicious errors, does oblige them unto. 2dly, Many congregations in Scotland are groaning under the load and weight of intrusions; they want faithful gospel-ministers: But, how can such ministers as pity their case, take the proper steps toward their help and relief? How shall they licence proper persons as probationers for the holy ministry? Or, how shall they ordain and appoint ministers over the oppressed heritage of God, to labour among them in the work of the gospel? There is no doing of this, while they continue in conjunction with the present judicatories. These, and several other instances of this kind, might be offered, to prove that a conjunction with the judicatories involves us in the omission of such duties as our station and character oblige unto. But this leads me to enquire into the right and warrant that the minority (tho' few in number) in a church have to associate together for the exercise of the keys of government and discipline, when the majority are carrying on a course of defection from received principles, and will not be reclaimed; or, when they refuse to discharge their duty, and cannot be prevailed upon to do it. I proceed then to

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wherein it is proven, that when the Majority of the Office-bearers of a Church do obstinately carry on a Course of Defection from Reformation-principles once attained unto, that the Minority in this Case, tho' very few in Number, have Divine Right and Warrant to exercise the Keys of Government and Discipline in a distinct Capacity from them.

Have in the preceeding sections made good the charge that was laid against the present judicatories of this national church, when I stated the question: Particularly, I have made it evident, that the conduct of the present judicatories, in the many important doctrinal points that have been brought to their bar, is such, that this church, as she is represented in them, is not the *pillar or ground of truth*; and

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that

that our excellent Confession of Faith, thro' the countenance and support that has been given to many gross and pernicious errors that have been under their consideration, cannot any more be look'd upon as a fixed standard of truth, or soundness in the faith, either in the said judicatories, or amongst such as are in conjunction with them. I have likewise evinced, that the present judicatories are tyrannical in the administration of the government; and that not in some few particular instances only, but in a series and tract of oppression and violence done to the flock and heritage of God, whereby the keys of government and discipline are perverted, and a lordly magisterial power is exercised over the subjects of the King of Zion, evasive of the great end and design of that order and government which he hath instituted and appointed in his spiritual kingdom, viz. *the perfecting of the saints, and the edifying of the body of Christ* Eph. iv. 12. Also, from what has been observed it evidently appears, that such are supported, encouraged and countenanced in ecclesiastical and spiritual functions and administrations, who are not lawfully chosen to the work of the ministry, but obstructed upon the church, or imposed upon dissenting and reclaiming congregations: And all this is done, yea, persisted in notwithstanding of petitions and representations, and repeated remonstrances from ministers and other church-members against their proceedings. From all which it is plain, that this national church, as she is represented in her present judicatories, has not only broke the bonds of our ecclesiastical union and conjunction as a visible organic body; but also that she has not these characters of a true church, unto which we may and ought to join ourselves, as they are laid down by our reformers in the 18th article of our first Confession of Faith: And consequently our secession from the present judicatories is just, warrantable and necessary, ay, and until the return to our reformation-standards, agreeable to the holy scriptures, the primary rule and standard, unto which all the churches of Christ ought to conform themselves, Gal. vi. 1.

I proceed now to prove, that all such as desire to stand fast to our reformation-principles, and to keep the word of the Lord's patience, have right on their side from the word of God, and likewise from the acts and constitutions of this church agreeable thereto, though few in number

er, to associate together, or to constitute themselves into
 distinct judicatories, for the exercise of the keys of govern-
 ment and discipline, that they may in a judicative capacity
 bear testimony to the truths of Christ, against the manifold
 injuries that are done to the same, in this day of defection
 and backsliding; and that they may, in the said capacity, as-
 sert the rights of Christ's spiritual kingdom, and the liberties
 of his subjects; and that they may contribute their endea-
 vours for their help and relief, in their present oppressed and
 broken circumstances thro' the land.

If we consider the primary end and design, next unto the
 glory of God and the honour of our exalted Redeemer, of
 church order, government and discipline, which is the
 glorification of the body of Christ; and if we likewise consi-
 der for what end pastors or teachers are given unto the church,
 namely, that they are set for the defence of the gospel of
 Christ, Phil. i. 7, 17. that they are particularly instructed,
 to teach the observance of all things whatsoever Christ hath
 commanded, Mat. xxviii. 20. that they are appointed to pub-
 lish and declare, to uphold and maintain the truths of God,
 which are either controverted or opposed, 1 Tim. iii. 15.
 that they are commanded to feed the flock of God, 1 Pet.
 2. Acts xx. 28. and to commit the ministerial trust unto
 faithful men, 2 Tim. ii. 2. When these things, I say, are
 fully considered, it appears to me to shine with bright evi-
 dence from the holy scriptures, that when the judicatories of
 particular visible church (which I have proven is the case at
 this day) do not stand for the defence of the gospel of Christ;
 when error is so far supported and countenanced, that it
 is dismissed from their bar either with a slight censure, or
 with no censure at all; and likewise, when they exercise a
 worldly and magisterial power over the heritage of God, when
 they rule over them with rigour; and when the sword of dis-
 cipline is turned against such as are cleaving to truth, and
 do no endeavour to bear testimony against a course of defecti-
 veness; and when such judicatories refuse to return to their du-
 ty; Then, and in this case, the minor part, tho' few in num-
 ber, may and ought to leave the backsliding part, and have
 a right and warrant to associate together for the exercise
 of the keys of government and discipline, in the defence of
 the gospel of Christ, and for the relief and support of
 the flock and the sheep of his pasture. This I have en-

deavoured to prove from several places of scripture, particularly from Jude 3. and Phil. i. 27. in the printed letter, which I refer. But, in regard I judge, that the controversy betwixt the associate presbytery and the present judicatories turns very much upon this point, I shall endeavour further to confirm and illustrate the same from the holy scriptures, also from the laudable acts and constitutions of this nation church agreeable thereto.

1st, As the key of doctrine is given by the Head of the church to every minister who has a commission from him, the keys of government and discipline are given to the office bearers of the church, two or more acting conjunctly, Mat. xviii. 19, 20. The right to exercise the keys of government and discipline, in the manner appointed by the Head of the church, belongs to the pastoral office, as well as the key of doctrine: And that solemn command given to the office bearers of the church, Acts xx. 28. *Feed the church of God*, includes the pastoral rule and government; so much the original word imports, as is very well known. Hence I argue. If the majority in the judicatories of a particular visible church carry on a course of defection from received principles, in the manner I have proven the present judicatories are doing, then the minor part, who are grieved with their proceedings, ought to leave them, and associate together for the exercise of the keys of government and discipline; otherwise they give up with the exercise of the keys to the majority who are carrying on the course of defection. That they give up with the keys, in this case, is evident and plain; for the majority must still be reckoned the court, and they only have the keys of government in their hand: And, when the minority give up with the keys to the majority in the case mentioned, many gross absurdities follow; as for instance, they give up the exercise of the keys to such as are perverting the keys of government and discipline, and making use of them to ends and purposes quite contrary to these for which they are appointed by the Head of the church; yea, the minor part, who have not forfeit their claim, give up the government and discipline to such who by their mal administration have *hic et nunc*, or in the present circumstantiated case, forfeit their right to the same; and consequently, by their continued conjunction with them in the judicatories, they support them, and strengthen their hands in ruling over the flock.

Christ with rigour, and in suffering truth to ly wounded and bleeding in the streets, without a suitable testimony unto it: Yea, further, the minority, while they continue in conjunction with such judicatories as are obstinately carrying on a course of defection, unwarrantably divest themselves of the power grant of the keys, which the Head of the church has made unto all such as bear his commission; and they leave the government in the hands of those who are spoiling the churches, and who are wounding and scattering the heritage of God; and at the same time they leave the Lord's flock and people, without help and relief, under the oppression and violence that is done them; and truth remains injured and wounded without a judicial testimony unto it: And consequently, by the said conjunction, they strengthen the hands of such as are carrying on a course of backsliding, and thereby become accessory to the guilt that is contracted in the judicatories. The only plausible exception that can be laid against the foresaid argument is, That if two or three may, upon alledged defections and backslidings, depart from communion with the judicatories of a church, and erect themselves into a distinct judicatory, then order cannot be maintained, and the unity of the church cannot be preserved. To which I reply, That the secession as it is stated at present from the judicatories is not upon merely alledged defections and backslidings, but upon such backslidings and defections as are justly charged against them, as I have proven in the former sections. If it is urged, Who shall be judge in the stiffness of the charge? Or, who shall decide the present question betwixt the associate presbytery and the judicatories? I answer, That we may appeal unto the word of God the primary rule and standard, and to our other received subordinate standards of doctrine, worship, government and discipline; let these be judge in the case betwixt the present judicatories and the associate presbytery; let these be judge in the charge that is laid against the judicatories: Let their proceedings and managements, in the many particular instances we have given, be weighed in the balance of the sanctuary; let them be tried according to the acts and constitutions of the church of Scotland agreeable to the holy scriptures. The author of the Essay, who has undertaken the management of their cause against secession from them, never attempts

absolutely to justify any of the instances of defection and sliding I have given; tho' he does what he can to extenuate their sin, as I have already observed: I leave it then with the judicatories themselves to judge how well he has acquitted himself in their defence, and how far they are obliged unto him for the service he has done them. With respect to the associate presbytery, if they were adopting any thing as a part of testimony, which is not founded upon the word of God and agreeable to our approven acts and constitutions; if they had espoused any thing in their testimony as a principle, that was never espoused in this national church in her reforming times; the above exception would be of force against the argument which I brought for the defence of their Presbyterian association: But let all their printed papers, particularly the *Judicial Act and Testimony*, be searched, it will be found that they have asserted our Presbyterian principles in a full and plain manner; they have likewise asserted the truths from the word of God and our Confession of Faith, in opposition unto many dangerous and pernicious errors of the present times, and the steps of defection which they have condemned, they have found them to be such as are contrary to the word of God, our solemn covenant-engagements, and our laudable acts and constitutions. Tho' the author of the Essay discovers his critical talent with abundance of ill humour against the seceding brethren, and tho' he has stretched himself, as we shall afterwards see, in order to defame and discredit their act and testimony; yet he has not, neither can he charge them with any principle adopted therein, but what has been received and confessed by this church in her reforming times. There are indeed some few particulars, which our author reckons controverted points, and which the presbytery have judicially declared to be steps of defection; but our author has not, neither can he plead from any of these which he calls controverted things, that the presbytery have adopted any thing contrary to our received and approven standards. If it is still urged, Shall a few depart from a great and considerable body? and, shall they take it upon them to emit a judicial act and testimony? Then let our author, and all who cause he pleads, know, that numbers give not authority nor weight to a cause of this nature; it is only truth that supports a religious cause: And therefore, tho' a testimony may

despised on account of the paucity of such as manage it, tho' it may prove a very popular and amusing argument to disregard a few departing from ecclesiastic communion in judicatories consisting of great numbers; yet numbers are not always a testimony for truth on their side. This is indeed one of the arguments that the church of Rome proved against our reformers; but they were told, That testimony for truth may be in the hands of a few, even of witnesses, Rev. ii. 3. against a very numerous body who departed from the truth and simplicity of the gospel.

And, All the ministers of the gospel are commanded to heed to the ministry which they have received in the Lord, that they fulfil it, Col. iv. 16. They must likewise teach the church to observe all things whatsoever her exalted Head hath commanded, Mat. xxviii. 19. They are also charged to commit the ministerial trust unto faithful men, 2 Tim. ii. 2. Hence I argue, That such is the state of matters in the present judicatories, that all who would make conscience of the duties unto which they are obliged by the above and the like scripture-commands that might be mentioned, ought to depart from communion with them, and associate themselves in a distinct capacity from them, in order to the exercise of the powers of government and discipline; in regard they cannot, while they continue in a conjunction with them, discharge any of the duties they are called unto, and which the state of matters in the church of Scotland at present requires. I have given some instances in the close of the preceeding section, to shew that a conjunction with the present judicatories restrains and binds up such ministers as are sensible of their duty, and are unable to discharge the same, from the performance of some particular duties, which the command of the Head of the church, their pastoral office, and the present state of the heritage and flock of Christ, do all oblige them unto. I shall now give some instances of some particular duties that ought to be discharged, and which cannot be done, unless such who are sensible of their duty, and who are grieved with the present proceedings of the judicatories, associate together for the exercise of government and discipline in a distinct capacity from them. 1st, If the office-bearers of the church, particularly the ministers of the gospel, would fulfil that ministry which they have received of the Lord, they ought not only judicially to declare the truths of Christ, but also judicially assert

assert them, in opposition unto the particular errors by which they are subverted in the times and places wherein they are. This I hope I have fully proven already, and I do not think the author of the Essay will refuse it. But the present judicatories of this national church do obstinately decline judicially to assert the truths, in direct and express opposition unto many dangerous and pernicious errors that have been very common among us; and consequently they refuse to fulfil that ministry which they have received of the Lord: Therefore I conclude that such who are sensible of their duty, and who are grieved with the injury that is done to truth, ought to associate together, and, in the name and authority of the Head of the church, display the banner of a judicial testimony for injury to truth, by condemning particularly and expressly such erroneous propositions or principles whereby the truths of God have been openly and wickedly opposed and undermined, and asserting the truth in direct opposition unto such gross and dangerous errors whereby the truths of God have been subverted amongst us. The author of the Essay cannot regret that the judicatories have declined a suitable testimony to truth; for he wishes there were an assertory act, and professes to regret the omissions of judicatories in this matter: Thus as we have already observed, he extenuates their sin, and makes but a very small account of such omissions, though they are such as involve the judicatories in the guilt of supporting and countenancing many dangerous errors; yea, they are such as are not only prejudicial to the present generation but also to the souls of posterity. If then these culpable and dangerous omissions of the judicatories are duly considered, how shall justice be done to truth? how shall the banner of a judicial testimony against error be displayed? how shall the Redeemer have that revenue of honour and glory which the churches owe unto him, namely, a public and judicial confession of his truths, in opposition to the injuries and indignities that are done them? how shall ministers fulfil their ministry, unless they depart from conjunction with such judicatories as decline to discharge this duty, and associate together that they may make a joint, public and judicial confession of the truth, in opposition unto dangerous and pernicious errors whereby the truth is opposed or subverted? 2dly, If ministers would fulfil their ministry, they ought to set the trumpet to their mouths, and to shew unto the Lord

profess

confessing people *their transgression, and the house of Jacob*
for sin, Isa. lviii. 1. It is not enough that sin is doctrinally
 declared, it ought also to be judicially condemned: But we
 not expect that the present judicatories will condemn par-
 ticularly the backslidings and defections of former times,
 when they refuse to acknowledge and condemn the sinful steps
 that they themselves have taken; as for instance, that act
 of Assembly 1732, whereby the rights and privileges of Christ's
 subjects, in choosing and calling of their own ministers, were
 overruled even to the declared enemies of our Presbyterian
 constitution. It was repealed, because it was past contrary
 to some rules directing after what manner acts of general con-
 vention should be concluded; but it was never condemned as
 contrary to the word of God, and the laudable acts and con-
 ventional decisions of this church, directing how ministers ought to
 be called and chosen: Yea, the present judicatories are so far
 from acknowledging and condemning violent intrusions, that
 they are carried on with an high hand to this very day. Like-
 wise, of late, the Sabbath of the Lord was profaned, and the
 immediate subordination of the courts of Christ's spiritual
 kingdom to the Lord Jesus the alone Head and King of Zion,
 was practically given up, by ministers their reading from the
 book of the act of parliament anent captain John Porteous. It
 cannot be expected that the present judicatories will condemn
 indeed, whereby the headship and sovereignty of Christ
 in the courts of his own house was invaded, and his holy
 Sabbath profaned; when the most part of the ministers of this
 church have read the said act in one shape or another. There-
 fore, since a judicial testimony against public sins and steps
 of defection cannot be obtained from the present judicatories,
 it is necessary that such ministers who are grieved with their
 proceedings, and who desire to discharge the duties of their
 ministerial office, should come out from among them, and
 associate together in distinct judicatories, that they may, ac-
 cording to the power and authority which they have received
 from the Lord Jesus, condemn particularly our public sins
 and backslidings from the Lord, and that they may humble
 themselves for these before him; and also, that they may
 call all ranks of persons in the land to repentance and humi-
 lation for the iniquities of the present generation, and for
 the sins of our fathers, conform to scripture pattern and ex-
 ample,

ample, Psal. cvi. Psal. lxxviii. 3dly, It is the duty of ministers of the gospel to feed the church of God which hath purchased with his own blood, and to commit the ministerial trust to faithful men, according to the Lord's express command in his own word, Acts xx. 28. John xvi. 13. 2 Tim. ii. 2. But such is the conduct of the present judicatories, and such is the state and situation of many congregations in Scotland at this day, that they cannot have faithful ministers set over them, unless such as are grieved with the present proceedings of the judicatories associate together in a distinct capacity from them, in order to the relief of the congregations as are groaning under the weight of violent settlements. I hope the author of the Essay will not refuse to acknowledge this is the state and condition of many congregations in Scotland; the judicatories have obtruded ministers upon them, they are thereby scattered and broken, and want the food for their souls: They must therefore either submit to the ministry of intruders, and acknowledge their pastoral authority over them, or be destitute of gospel-ministers, unto whom by pastoral care and inspection they can warrantably submit, but the former they cannot do, without betraying their principles, and wounding their consciences: Therefore, unless they have ministers appointed over them according to the divine rule and institution, they must remain like sheep without a shepherd. But, how shall they obtain such ministers? the smaller part in the judicatories, who are grieved and afflicted with the above violent settlements, continue still in their conjunction with them, they cannot relieve the oppressed flock and heritage of God, as I have already observed. And I add, That thereby they involve themselves in personal guilt; in regard that, by this means, they not only disobey obedience to the above positive and express command of the Head of the church, but also become accessary unto the continued miseries and bondage under which many of the Lord's people do labour and groan thro' the land; they have a hand, either in the perishing or starving of many souls, than in a famine of the word of the Lord. Wherefore it is necessary, that such ministers, tho' few in number, who pity the grieved and oppressed heritage of God, should associate together, that they may appoint ministers over them according to the divine pattern and rule: To this they are obliged

office, as also by the above-mentioned and other positive express commands; which are likewise their warrant for actions of this nature. From all the above, and the like considerations, it is plain, that, when the judicatories of a particular visible church do obstinately carry on a course of secession, the minor part, tho' few in number, have right on their side, and are fully warranted from the word of the Lord, to associate together for the exercise of the keys of government and discipline, that they may fulfil that ministry which they have received in all its parts and branches, and that they may discharge these duties towards the church of Christ, in the state of the church, their office, and the positive commands of the Head of the church, do all oblige them un-

And particularly, that in a day and time when error prevails, and sin abounds, they may testify judicially against error and sin, and display a banner for truth; as also, that, in any day and time when the heritage of God are oppressed and distressed, they may use proper endeavours for appointing ministers over them, unto whose pastoral inspection they may voluntarily commit themselves, under the leading and direction of the chief Shepherd of the sheep, the Lord Jesus Christ.

The only exception that is brought against the above argument, as I have laid it is, That ministers may fully discharge their duty, and exoner themselves, by dissents or protestations against the bad acts and wrong decisions of the judicatories. I have already observed in the introduction, that protestations of this kind, against the supreme judicatory, were judicially condemned by the general assembly 1733. tho' protestations may in some particular instances be a sufficient means of exoneration, when they are allowed, together with their reasons, to be marked in the records of the church; yet I humbly judge, that dissents and protestations are not in every case be reckoned a sufficient testimony for the church; and particularly, that they cannot in the present situation of the judicatories, be reckoned a sufficient discharge of the duty that is incumbent on the office-bearers of the church, who desire to be found faithful to the Lord in this day of declining and backsliding, and that for the following reasons; 1st, A continuing in communion with the judicatories of a backsliding church, under the colour of such dissents and protestations, opens a door for a corrupt

corrupt mixture in the house of God: At this rate, Arminians, Socinians, Arminians and Calvinists may sit down together as members of the same ecclesiastical body; and I know not but the right hand of fellowship may after the same manner be given to Deists, who run down revealed religion, if they can conform themselves to the religion that has the least countenance in the society wherein they live. And if we consider the management of the present judicatories, in so many important doctrinal errors that have been brought to their bar, which I have already examined; however some may please themselves with what they call testimonies in judicatories, yet, while no joint and judicial testimony is given to truth, the Lord Jesus and his truths are not confessed by the ecclesiastical body: And therefore I say, However some may please themselves with such testimonies, yet they have ground to fear that the covering will be found narrower than they can wrap themselves in it, and the bed shorter than they can stretch themselves upon it. *2dly*, Tho' a dissenting protestation, with the reasons thereof, should be recorded at the supreme judicatory, when truth lies wounded and bleeding in our streets; yet this is not a faithful discharge of the trust committed unto ministers, it is not a fulfilling of their ministry, it is not a doing the whole of what their office obliges them unto, and what they have a right and warrant to do; in regard a judicial testimony to truth is still wanting. A protestation in the court may be the deed of a few in the court, testifying against the proceedings of the court as wrong, and giving their reasons why they judge so; but yet, in the mean time, they give up with the government and discipline unto such as are suppressing and bearing down the truth, or who are protecting and screening the erroneous from censure, and thereby supporting and countenancing error. I have elsewhere * shown that in this case a protestation or dissent bears no proportion at all unto the injury that is done to truth, and therefore shall not here insist upon it. I shall only add, That as the support and maintenance of divine truth is one of the great ends and designs of the institution of ecclesiastical courts in the church of Christ, so, if the church representative makes not public and judicial confession and acknowledgement of the truth, in opposition unto the errors that are venturing unto the prejudice and subversion of the same, she re-

* Letter, p. 6, 13.

to give the Redeemer that revenue of glory, honour and
 life that ought to be given him before a wicked and per-
 se generation, Ma x. 32, 33. Mark viii. 38. 3dly, Tho'
 supreme judicatory should record a dissent or protestation,
 with the reasons thereof, against the intrusion of ministers u-
 n-dissenting and reclaiming congregations; yet it is obvi-
 ous and plain, that there is no relief given thereby unto such
 as are labouring under the load and weight of such grievous
 oppression and tyranny: notwithstanding of such dissents and
 protestations, they must want the pastoral inspection of faith-
 ful and sent ministers, unless such as protest do associate in
 distinct judicatories for their help and relief. Howsoever
 one of our reverend brethren may please themselves with
 such protestations, yet they leave the flock of Christ under
 intruded hirelings; they do not what is their duty to do, and
 what the chief Shepherd of the sheep commands them to do,
 while they take not the proper and necessary steps, to appoint
 to oppressed and destitute congregations, ministers accord-
 ing to the divine rule and institution: Neither can they take
 the necessary steps for the same, unless they declare a secessi-
 on from the present judicatories, and associate together, that
 they may commit the ministerial trust to faithful men. From
 what I have observed, I hope it is evident, that such as con-
 tinue in the present judicatories, even tho' they witness by
 reasonings, dissents or protestations against their sinful pro-
 ceedings, are involved in the omission of such duties as the
 head of the church has enjoined them, and which their office
 does oblige them unto; and consequently, that union and
 conjunction with the present judicatories, in the present
 situation and state of matters in this national church, is upon
 sinful and unwarrantable terms: As also, it may be evident
 from the grant of the keys to the office-bearers of the house
 of God by the Lord Jesus the Head of the church, and from
 the peremptory instructions that are given to ministers of the
 gospel to teach all things whatsoever Christ hath command-
 ed, to fulfil their ministry, to feed Christ's sheep and lambs;
 that, when the judicatories of a church carry on a course of
 secession from the Lord, as in the particular instances I have
 given concerning the judicatories of this national church,
 men, and in this case, such ministers as desire to be found
 faithful, though they should be few in number, have di-
 vine right and warrant to leave the backsliding part, and to
 asso-

associate together, that they may in a judicial capacity bear testimony to the truth, and vindicate the liberties of the church of Christ; and consequently, that the associate presbytery have divine right and warrant for their present practice, in emitting a judicial testimony for truth, and in using their endeavours for the relief of the Lord's oppressed heritage throughout the land.

3dly, I may likewise prove the divine right and warrant that is pled for, from that solemn charge given to the churches of Galatia, Gal. v. 1. *Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made you free, and be not intangled again with the yoke of bondage.* The Spirit of God, by the apostle in this epistle, warns the churches of Galatia against erroneous and seducing teachers, who perverted the gospel of Christ, chap. i. 7. and exhorts them to stand fast in the Christian liberties, that is, in the faith, profession and practice of the truths of the gospel, in opposition to the doctrines and principles of these corrupt teachers, which had a natural tendency to bring them under spiritual thralldom and bondage. The charge, to *stand fast* in their liberties, is given to every individual member of these churches, according to the place that every one had in the organic body; and they are all hereby commanded to keep themselves pure and free from the bondage of error. The office-bearers of that church are likewise hereby enjoined to discharge the duty incumbent upon them in their station, for maintaining their Christian liberty and freedom; as is evident from the 12. verse, *I would, say ye, that they were even cut off which trouble you.* As it is the leaven of error, ver. 9. which the apostle warns them against; so this leaven is purged out of the church by ecclesiastical process and discipline, particularly when such as trouble the church with this leaven are either reformed by the discipline of the Lord's house, or else cut off from the church by this spiritual sword: And this belongs only to the office-bearers of the church; it is their province, not only doctrinally to guard the church against error, but also judicially to condemn and censure the same. And as the apostle does in the plainest terms declare unto the office-bearers of the church their duty, in the 12. verse, so, in the 9. verse a weighty reason is given, *A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump.* Tho' the churches of Galatia are mentioned in the plural number, Gal. i. 2. yet in this verse they are called

lump, being one ecclesiastic or organic body; and hereby the apostle declares likewise in the plainest terms, that, if the church was not condemned and censured, the whole body would be held and reputed as leavened. As the duty of the office-bearers of the church of Galatia, and consequently of other office-bearers when the church is in the like circumstances, is clearly pointed out by the Spirit of God in the above words; so, if we shall make the following supposition, that the majority of the office-bearers in that church refused to condemn error, or to censure the erroneous; and that, in their ecclesiastical capacity, they spoiled the several particular churches of any of the valuable liberties wherewith Christ had made them free; and that, instead of yielding obedience unto the commands of the Head of the church, they justified themselves in their disobedience to the same; I say, when the fact is thus stated, let every unprejudiced person judge what the lesser part of the office-bearers of that church, tho' few in number, who are grieved with the disobedience of the greater part, ought to have done in obedience to the foresaid commands. Could the disobedience of the greater part absolve them from the discharge of these duties positively and expressly enjoined the several office-bearers of the church of Galatia? Or, because the judicatories of Galatia would not have fast in the liberties wherewith Christ made them free, and because they would not condemn error or censure the erroneous, were the few that were grieved with their proceedings, and who might easily see that the management of the said judicatories had an evident tendency to the ruin of that church; were they, I say, thereby bound up from exercising the keys of government and discipline, or from supporting and maintaining truth judicially, and asserting the liberties and freedom of the disciples of Christ? Or, were the minority thereby bound to continue in ecclesiastical communion with the greater part who refused to discharge their duty, when the Spirit of God declares, that, if the leaven of error is not purged out, the *whole lump*, that is, the whole ecclesiastic body, was thereby leavened? Tho' the author of the Essay, p. 42. and frequently thro' his book, pleads against secession from the present judicatories, from the state of the churches of Galatia, and the other churches erected by the apostles; yet it appears to me very plain, that, if we

duly consider the commands and injunctions given to the office bearers of the churches, in the several epistles that we writ them, and particularly these that are given to the church of Galatia, we shall see their duty clearly pointed out to them. The above command, to stand fast in their Christian liberties, is given to all the office-bearers and members of the church of Galatia; and obedience is required from them to it, according to their different spheres and stations: Consequently, if the majority of the office-bearers proved disobedient to the divine command, the smaller part, tho' few in number, who desired to adhere to their Christian liberties, were obliged to give obedience unto it, and had sufficient right and warrant for the discharge of their duty, in a distinct capacity from the backsliding part of the said church. If the author of the Essay would manage the argument on purpose against the conduct of the associate presbytery, he must prove, that, when the major part of the office-bearers of a church refuse obedience to such positive divine commands as are above expressed, that the unfaithfulness of the majority binds up the lesser part, who are sensible of their duty from the faithful discharge of the same: Or, which is to the same purpose, he must prove, that when the judicatories of a church in their judicative capacity, instead of maintaining and supporting the truth, refuse to condemn dangerous errors when brought to their bar; and when, instead of vindicating and asserting the liberties and freedom of the members of the church, they wreath a yoke of bondage about their necks (which I have already proven is the case with the present judicatories) that, notwithstanding of this, the smaller part, who are sensible of their duty, ought to remain in communion and conjunction with them, and that they ought to associate by themselves, to assert the liberties wherever Christ has made his people free, and to maintain a testimony for the truth in opposition to error; tho' office-bearers are given to the church, and ecclesiastical courts are instituted and appointed, for these and the like valuable ends and purposes. Or, to express it in few words, the author of the Essay, under the pain of losing all his specious arguments from the churches of Galatia and Corinth, must prove the following proposition, viz. *That, when the majority of an ecclesiastical body continue to disobey the express commands of the Head of the church, the minority are thereby well warranted*

*obey the said commands, for the sake of peace, and to maintain
on with the majority.* But this I judge he will not be able

reconcile to the scriptures of truth, nor will it agree with
own declared principle, Essay, p. 36. That we are not to
p up union with a church at the expence of the least sin.

might in like manner prove the divine right and warrant
it is pled for, from the reproofs and admonitions, from
commands and directions, that are given in the several
Apostolic epistles to the churches to whom they are directed:
I shall not further insist upon this; I refer the reader to
printed letter, for what I have observed upon the cases
the churches of Thyatira and Pergamos, and on the re-
profs and directions that are given them. I hope, from
what is now said, it may be evident, that, when the conduct
the present judicatories of this national church is seriously
considered, the associate presbytery have divine right and
warrant for the steps that they have taken; and particularly,
their emitting a judicial act and testimony to the doctrine,
worship, government and discipline of our Lord's house, and
against the several defections both of present and former
times from the same. I shall only here subjoin the words of
the apostle, Col. ii. 2. *That their hearts might be comforted,
being knit together in love,—to the acknowledgement of the my-
stery of God, and of the Father, and of Christ.* From these
words I observe, That there can be no true fellowship with-
out love; and church members, whether office bearers or o-
thers, cannot be *knit together* in love where offence is daily
given, and the matter and ground of offence is obstinately
persisted in and justified, notwithstanding of the most duti-
ful representations against the same. I further observe, That
the members of the church ought to be *knit together, to the
acknowledgement of the mystery of God.* How then can we have
ecclesiastical union and conjunction with judicatories, that
refuse to acknowledge and confess many great and important
truths, in opposition unto the many pernicious errors by which
they are subverted?

Lastly, When the conduct of the present judicatories is
considered, the laudable acts and constitutions of this church
warrant our secession from them, and our association toge-
ther for displaying the banner of a judicial testimony for
truth. The duties pointed out unto us, from the acts and
constitutions of this reformed church, are summed up in our

Covenants, National and Solemn League. In the National Covenant, we swear that we "shall continue in the observance of the doctrine and discipline of this kirk, and defend the same, according to our vocation and power, the days of our lives." And in the bond subjoined, 1638, whereby the covenant was sworn with accommodation to their then circumstances, we swear, that we shall "continue in the profession and obedience of the foresaid religion, and that we shall defend the same, and resist all contrary errors and corruptions, according to our vocation, and to the utmost of that power that God hath put into our hands, all the days of our life." Also, in the first article of our Solemn League, we swear, "That we shall sincerely, really and constantly, thro' the grace of God, endeavour, in our several places and callings, the preservation of the reformed religion in the church of Scotland, in doctrine, worship, discipline and government, against our common enemies." And in the second article we swear, "That we shall not suffer ourselves, directly nor indirectly, to be divided and withdrawn from our covenant union and conjunction, either by making secession to the contrary part, or by giving ourselves out to detestable indifferency and neutrality in this cause." Can we, in a consistency with our covenant union and conjunction, maintain a conjunction with the present judicatories who are carrying on a course of defection to the contrary part? Can we, without giving up ourselves to a detestable indifferency and neutrality in the cause of God, see error lifting up its head without any suitably testimony against it? And, can we see the heritage of God scattered and broken without using our endeavours for affording relief to the oppressed people? Do we, in our places and callings, forsake our reformed doctrine, government and discipline? Can we defend the same against all contrary errors and corruptions, according to our vocations, and the utmost of that power that God hath put into our hands, if we shall be witnesses to the injury that is done to truth, if we shall see the rights of the Redeemer's spiritual kingdom invaded, his subjects spoiled of their rights and privileges, and yet the mean time shall not use that power which is put into our hands, and which we have a right to use according to our several places and callings, namely, of lifting up a just testimony

imony for truth, and for the rights and privileges of the subjects of the Redeemer's kingdom? And therefore I humbly judge that we have right and warrant to associate together in distinct judicatories from the present, who are carrying on a course of defection, that we may thereby endeavour, only to answer the end and design of the institution of ecclesiastical courts in the New-Testament church, but that may also do what in us lies to prosecute the ends of our solemn covenant-engagements.

Fourthly, All the ministers of this church, when they are ordained to the office of the holy ministry, solemnly promise and engage, "That they shall firmly and closely adhere to the doctrine contained in our Confession of Faith;—and likewise, That they shall to the utmost of their power, in their station, assert, maintain and defend the said doctrine, worship, discipline and government, &c." But the present judicatories, as has been made evident, refuse to assert, maintain and defend the doctrines contained in our Confession of Faith, in opposition unto many errors subversive of the same, that have been brought to their bar; and, instead of maintaining and defending our Presbyterian government and discipline, they pursue such measures as have an evident tendency to overthrow the same, as has likewise been made evident in several particular instances: Therefore, those who are sensible of their duty as office-bearers of the church, and of the solemn engagements they have come under, that they shall to the utmost of their power, in their station, assert, maintain and defend the doctrine contained in our Confession of Faith, &c. have right and warrant, from the acts and constitutions of this church, to associate together for the exercise of the keys of government and discipline, that they may assert and maintain, in a judicial capacity, the doctrine contained in our Confession of Faith, and our Presbyterian church government and discipline; and consequently the associate presbytery, in their judicial act and testimony, and in their several proceedings thereupon, are endeavouring to pay their vows unto the Lord, and to fulfil the engagements that they came under, when they were ordained to the office of the holy ministry. I shall only further observe on this head, That all the ministers of this church do solemnly engage themselves, and also sign it with their hand, that they shall never endeavour directly nor indirectly, the

prejudice or subversion of the foresaid doctrine, worship, government and discipline. I submit it to the judgment of those as are not quite prejudiced, if the present judicatories in fulfilling this solemn engagement; or rather, if the whole of their management, with respect to the doctrinal errors that have been brought to their bar, is not directly to the prejudice of the doctrines contained in our excellent Confession of Faith; as likewise, if their conduct, with respect to the many instances I have given of tyranny in the administration, is not directly to the prejudice of our Presbyterian church-government and discipline; and consequently, if they are not guilty of the violation of the foresaid solemn engagement that they have come under, when ordained to the office of the holy ministry. When all these things are impartially considered, they are sufficient to justify the conduct of the associate presbytery, and to evidence that they have right warrant, from the laudable acts and constitutions of the church of Scotland, to depart from ecclesiastical communion and conjunction with the present judicatories, and to associate together, for asserting judicially the truths that are proposed and subverted, and for endeavouring in the said capacity the relief of the broken and oppressed heritage of God thro' the land.

6thly, The bond of our ecclesiastical union and conjunction with the present judicatories of this national church broke, by the sinful and unwarrantable proceedings of the said judicatories: Therefore, such who desire to hold fast that reformation purity, once attained unto, ought not to depart from communion with them, until they return to their duty; but they have also right on their side to associate together for the exercise of the keys of government and discipline, in a distinct capacity from them. I have already observed, that all ecclesiastical union and conjunction, in any particular visible church, is under certain conditions and limitations: the members of the organic body are joined together by some special ligaments and bonds: It is true, that the profession and acknowledgement of the truth, as it is contained in the holy scriptures, the only unerring rule of faith and practice, deserves to be reckoned the primary ligament and bond of all such union and conjunction, Isa. 20. Gal. vi. 16. 2 Pet. i. 19. but the secondary ligaments or bonds of ecclesiastical union and conjunction are the

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ordinate standards of doctrine, worship, government and discipline, which are received and adopted by any particular church, as agreeable to and founded upon the holy scripture; and the present state and circumstances of the church make these subordinate standards more and more necessary, in order to knit together the members of the organic body. Such is the blindness and wickedness of men, that they wrest the holy scriptures to their own destruction; such is the cunning craftiness of men, whereby they ly in wait to deceive, that they father their lies upon the holy scripture; they even pretend scripture-authority for their gross and pernicious errors: Hence, Confessions of Faith are necessary and suitable means of acknowledgeing and confessing the truth, in opposition unto the sleight of men, who subvert the same: they are likewise necessary to evidence that we receive and hold the holy scriptures in their genuine sense and meaning, in opposition to the perverse wrestlings of the same by men of unstable and corrupt minds. And as the reverend Mr. Masterton observes, in his *Apology* for the Presbyterians in the north of Ireland, p. 17. in answer to a common objection against Confessions of Faith, "By scripture-precepts and precedents, dangerous errors ought to be explicitly declared against; our Saviour expressly apprized his hearers of the errors of the Scribes and Pharisees; the apostle Paul expressly mentions the errors of Hymeneus and Philetus, 2 Tim. ii. 17. *Whose word doth eat as a canker.* ver. 18. *Who concerning the faith have erred, saying that the resurrection is past already; and overthrow the faith of some.* The great apostle judged it necessary to be as express in opposing these errors, as the abettors of them were bold and express in affirming them: And, in conformity to these scripture-examples, the Confessions of the reformed churches consist very much of open and express declarations against the errors which infested the church, especially in these times when such confessions were imposed." In like manner, thro' the subtilty of Satan, and the wickedness of men, that order and government which Christ has appointed in his house has been subverted in the Christian church, and the ordinances of worship have likewise been changed and corrupted: Hence it is necessary for a particular visible church, that would approve herself unto the Head, to have the order and government of the house of God laid down according

to the pattern shown in the mount; and to have such a directory for the public worship of God, to which the members of the church may warrantably conform themselves, if they would maintain union and communion together, as members of the same ecclesiastic or organic body, to the honour of God, and the praise and glory of their exalted Redeemer.

That I may apply what is above advanced to the state and condition of this national church as she is represented in her present judicatories; I hope it will not be refused by such as own themselves to be Presbyterians, that the outward bonds and ligaments of the members of this national church among themselves, and particularly of the union and conjunction of the office-bearers of the church in all her judicatories, and the doctrine, worship, government and discipline of the Lord's house, as the same are held forth from the holy scriptures, in our Confession of Faith, Books of Discipline, Form of Presbyterian Church government, and Directory for worship. All ranks of persons in this land are solemnly bound and obliged to abide in the faith, profession and obedience to the said doctrine, worship, &c. by the national covenant of Scotland, and by the Solemn League and Covenant of the three nations; and all the ministers of this church, when ordained to the office of the ministry, do promise and engage, as I have already observed, that they shall firmly and closely adhere to the doctrine contained in our Confession of Faith to the purity of worship practised in this church, and to our Presbyterian government and discipline; and that in their station, and to the utmost of their power, they shall assert, maintain and defend the said doctrine, worship, government and discipline; and that they shall never endeavour directly nor indirectly the prejudice or subversion of the same. But I have already proven, that these bonds of our ecclesiastical unity are broke by the present judicatories, in regard thereof oneous have pled at their bar, that their perverse schemes were agreeable to the doctrines contained in our Confession of Faith; and yet the edge of divine truth, as it is laid down from the word of God in our Confession of Faith, has not been directed against the new and different shapes under which the old Arian, Arminian, and other errors have appeared: Wherefore the judicatories of this church are justly chargeable with letting slip the truths that they have received

ed, contrary to Heb. ii. 1. And, by their above conduct and management, truth has been left naked without a judicial testimony unto it, in direct opposition unto the errors subverting the same; whereby our excellent Confession of Faith cannot any more be reckoned, in the present situation of this national church, a fixed standard of soundness in faith, at least with respect unto these important truths that have been either directly or indirectly opposed and subverted by the several pernicious schemes that have been brought before the bar of the assemblies. In like manner, the bond of ecclesiastical unity, as it respects the order, government and discipline of the Lord's house, is broke by the present judicatories; in regard our Presbyterian frame and constitution is unhinged in the many particular instances which I have mentioned of tyranny in the administration: Therefore I conclude, that such who are grieved with the conduct and management of the judicatories, and who are sensible of their duty, have taken on their side, from the principles and constitution of the Presbyterian or covenanted church of Scotland, to associate together for the exercise of the keys of government and discipline, that they may, in a judicative capacity, acknowledge, confess and assert the truths held forth from the word of God in our Confession of Faith; as also that they may, in the same capacity, assert, maintain and defend our Presbyterian principles and constitution.

S E C T. VI.

When the Conduct of the Judicatories is considered, since the Time that the Secession from them was first stated and declared; and particularly, the Conduct of Ministers and Judicatories with respect unto the late Act of Parliament anent Captain John Porteous; as also the Act of Assembly 1738, against the Seceding Ministers, are enquired into.

Have, in the preceeding sections, laid the argument for secession from the present judicatories, mainly, in the manner in which the secession was stated, when four ministers were thrust out from communion with them *anno* 1733, in consequence of an act and sentence of the preceeding assembly

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bly past against the said ministers. But, tho' a secession stated at that time upon very just and weighty grounds, it is to be regretted that the judicatories of this national church are so far from shewing a disposition for removing the ground of secession, that by their procedure from time to time increase or strengthen the same; and, instead of affording the seceding brethren the agreeable hopes of union and junction with them in the Lord, the procedure of the judicatories is such, as gives them more and more reason of ground, not only for continuing in their secession, but for enlarging and extending the same further than it was before the commission of the general assembly in the said year 1737. There are some things advanced by the author of the Essay, p. 5. wherewith he thinks to twit the seceding brethren; as for instance, that our reverend brother Mr. Erskine. in his answers to the remarks of the Synod of Perth and Stirling on his sermon, October 12, 1732, says, "I know that there is a great body of faithful ministers in the church of Scotland, with whom I do not reckon myself worthy to be compared." And downward in the same answers, "I know that a vast many of them have God's call, and the church's call." Hence our author concludes, "there be a body and a great body, many and a vast many in the church of Scotland, of faithful ministers, having God's call to the work of the gospel, I think she is a church of Christ; and who (says he) can but own her such?" I shall not insist upon the terms, *true church*, frequent with our author; I have said what I judge sufficient upon them: But I must here observe, that our author's above conclusion, in which he seems to boast, does not follow from any of his premisses; and my reason for this observation is, That tho' there should be many, yea, a vast many ministers in a church, having the Lord's call to the work of the gospel; yet, if the majority in the judicatories are carrying on a course of defection, the majority are still the church, and therefore the majority are the church representative. We have already proven, that this national church, as she is presented in her present judicatories, is carrying on a course of defection from her reformation principles; and I am able to confirm and illustrate the argument in this section. We then, tho' there should be many that have had the Lo

, and the church's call to the work of the ministry, who continue in connexion and conjunction with the present judicatories? It does not therefore follow that this national church, as she is represented in them, is a true church according to the obvious sense and meaning (as above explained) of the 18th article of our first Confession of Faith: Therefore our author's argument may very well be turned against himself in the following manner; If it is so, as I have already shown, that the judicatories of this church are carrying on a course of defection from our reformation purity, and refuse to be reclaimed, then it is the duty of such ministers who profess to be grieved with their proceedings, to come out among them, and to bear testimony against a course of defection in a way of secession from them, that they may exert themselves in their station, and according to their power and ability, for asserting, maintaining and defending the doctrine, worship, government and discipline of the house of God, in this day of treading down in our valley of vision: or, as there are degrees of faithfulness, so these worthy ministers would be more faithful to the Head of the church, and to the commission they have received from him, as also to the souls of the present and rising generations, if they would depart from communion with the present judicatories, who show their contempt upon their representations and petitions, and where they are often born down with banter and scorn, when they make any thing like an honest appearance against the sinful steps that are taken, and if they would associate together for the faithful discharge of their duty, in the exercise of the keys of government and discipline, for the ends and purposes for which they are given them by the exalted Head of the church. If one heart and soul were given to such ministers, who profess to be grieved with the present course of backsliding from the Lord, to exert themselves after this manner, it would be a promising token for good, in these days where we have seen evil; it would be a door of hope unto this sinking, broken and sinking church; and might, thro' the blessing of the Lord, stagger the counsels and projects of such as are carrying on a course of defection.

There is another thing advanced by the author of the Essay, p. 5, 6. viz. That Mr. Erskine in his protestation against the sentence of the assembly anno 1733, to which the other

other three ministers adhered, declares, "That he had a
 " great and dutiful regard to the judicatories of this church
 " to whom (says he) I owe my subjection in the Lord." He
 adds, That the brethren in their representation given in to
 commission of the assembly 1733, "when speaking of the
 " protestation taken against the commission that year,"
 should have said, against the assembly that year) "they
 " Our protestation is so far from impugning the just power
 " and authority of the supreme judicatories of this church
 " that it plainly acknowledges the same." From the above
 expressions our author argues, "Now, if a true church
 " whose authority in her supreme judicatories in 1733 was
 " to be acknowledged and regarded with a very great respect
 " as just, I hope she is not vastly worse since that time; but
 " some stop has been put to what then was the chief ground
 " of complaint, viz. violent intrusions." I have already ob-
 served, that it is not matter of fact that violent intrusions
 were the chief ground of complaint: There are two other
 things advanced by our author in his two last lines above
 cited; the one is, when he tells us, That he hopes the
 church is not vastly worse since the foresaid time; and the
 other is, the ground he gives us for this his hope, where
 after his ordinary way, he extenuates our public sins, by
 sinuating in his smooth manner that this church is somewhat
 amended: "For, says he, some stop hath been put—to violent
 " lent intrusions." But, as this is the ground of our au-
 thor's hope, I humbly judge it will be found as weak as his
 superstructure is imaginary. I might here observe, that the
 above protestation mentioned by our author was entred, while
 we were contending in a way of church communion with the
 judicatories. Before the secession was declared and stated, and
 consequently while we were using the ordinary means of deal-
 ing with them for their repentance and reformation; of this
 I have given some short account already in the introduction
 and therefore shall not now insist upon it. What I here in-
 tend is, to shew that the present judicatories of this national
 church are worse, or, to use our author's own words, they
 are *vastly worse*, since the above protestation was entred
 against the act and sentence of the assembly 1733. And, for
 the proof of this, I offer the following particular instances of
 their procedure and conduct.

2. After the entering of the above protestation, the fore-
 assembly pass'd an act and sentence against the protesting
 ministers, appointing their commission to suspend them in
 they should not retract their protestation, and to lay them
 under an higher censure if they should not submit to the sen-
 tence of suspension: This was a step vastly worse than any
 the judicatories had yet taken, when it is considered,
 by the said act and sentence, new and unwarrantable
 censures of ministerial communion were imposed, as I have al-
 ready observed. Our author could not but very well know
 that this sentence was posterior to the protestation; and as he
 never professes to justify, but rather seems to condemn the a-
 bove sentence, so he cannot refuse that the judicatories may
 be at least somewhat worse: And, if he had understood the
 present question and argument, he might have known that the
 point upon which the secession was at first stated, was the a-
 bove-mentioned act and deed of the assembly, whereby mini-
 sters were deprived of their freedom and liberty of testifying
 doctrinally from the pulpit, and by protestation in the supreme
 judicatory, against a course of defection. If notwithstanding
 this sentence of the assembly, posterior to the entering of
 the protestation, our author does not reckon the judicatories
 any worse, yet I doubt if he shall find a parallel unto this
 extraordinary sentence, since our reformation from Popery,
 whereby four ministers were thrust out from communion with
 the judicatories, on account of a protestation for their just
 and necessary exoneration.

2dly, The above arbitrary sentence was execute in a very
 arbitrary manner by the commission of the foresaid assembly:
 they refused to consider what the protesting ministers had to
 offer for their just and necessary vindication, they refused the
 presentation above mentioned a reading; the said ministers
 shov'd to retract their protestation, otherwise nothing could
 satisfy the commission, or save them from censure. As the
 arbitrary execution of the above extraordinary sentence was a
 step vastly worse than any thing the judicatories had formerly
 done, so the proceedings of that commission were neither dis-
 approved nor condemned by the subsequent assembly, but
 held and reputed to be formal and legal deeds, as I have alrea-
 dy shown from the act of the said assembly with reference to
 the seceding ministers.

3dly, Tho' the author alledges, p. 6. That some stop
 hath

hath been put to what he calls the chief ground of complaint, viz violent intrusions; and, Essay, p. 30. he tells us, That a considerable stop hath been put to them for some time gone: Yet the present judicatories are worse even in the number of violent intrusions than formerly; every one of our assemblies since the year 1734 have either authorized, supported, countenanced such violent settlements, either upon the footing of the repealed act 1732, or upon the footing of the patronage act: As for instance, the assembly 1735 appointed a call to be moderated for the presentee to the parish of Carridden, and they refer the case of the inrolment of the intruders into the parish of Muckhart and Troquire unto the respective synods; this was a plain authorizing of the synods to inrol these intruders, so the remit to the synod of Perth bears an appointment unto them to continue their endeavours to obtain harmony at that corner. The obvious meaning of this appointment is, that they should use their endeavours to bring the people in Muckhart to submit to the ministry of an intruder. The assembly 1736 appointed the presbytery of Stirling to proceed to a violent settlement in the parish of Denny, and at the same time expressly to injoin the said presbytery to be at pains to bring the people of the said parish to submit to the decisions of the church, and to the ministry of the intruded presentee. The same assembly appointed the presbytery of Dumfries, and synod, to inrol the intruder into the parish of Troquire as a member of their respective judicatories, and to support him in his ministry, and to endeavour to bring the people in that parish to submit to it. Again, the assembly anno 1737 " declare their dissatisfaction with
 " the conduct of the presbytery of Stirling, in neglecting
 " refusing to obey the appointment of the assembly 1736 with
 " respect to the settlement of Mr. James Stirling, the presentee
 " to the parish of Denny: And they appoint the said presbytery
 " tery to proceed to the trials and settlement of the presentee
 " to the said parish, and to finish the same before the first of
 " September that year; and, in case he is not actually settled
 " before that time, the synod of Perth and Stirling are appointed
 " pointed at their October meeting to proceed to his trial
 " and to finish his settlement before the month of March ensuing:
 " And it is expressly declared, that it shall not be lawful
 " ful for the synod to put any question, whether they should
 " obey this appointment; but that any ten or more members
 " sters thereof do proceed as above directed, whether and
 " other

others of the synod concur with them or not, or notwithstanding that others, or even the greatest part then present, should oppose the execution of this act: And in case the synod, or such number of them as above-mentioned, shall not before the first of November enter the presentee upon trials, or before the first of March finish the same, the assembly impower a special commission of the said general assembly to convene at Edinburgh on the third Wednesday of November or March respectively, with power to adjourn themselves as they shall think fit, in order to take trials, and ordain the presentee as minister of Denny." Al- the same assembly appoint a settlement in the town and parish of Perth, upon the footing of the act 1732, even when the majority of the elders of the said parish were dissenting from the said settlement; and a constitute session remaining against the same, before all the judicatories of the church. Likewise, the assembly 1738 appointed a violent settlement in the parish of Dron, the call being only signed by heritors and one elder of the said parish, and the most of the congregation by far dissenting and reclaiming: As so, they sustained a call for doctor Wisheart to be one of ministers of Edinburgh, which proceeded purely upon footing of the repealed act 1732.

The above are some instances of some violent settlements, amongst others that might be condescended upon, which have been either authorised or supported by the national assemblies late; besides instances of this kind, that might be offered from the procedure of the commissions of the several general assemblies, by vertue of their delegated power from them, since the assembly 1734: Therefore our author must needs be very much assurance, when he would have his reader to believe that *some stop*, yea, that a *considerable stop*, has been put to violent intrusions for some time bygone. Does he think with his fair and smooth words to put out the eyes of men? It is indeed to be regreted, that the most part are obstinately blind, that they will not see the grounds and issues of the Lord's controversy against us; and our author's reasonings have a manifest tendency to cherish them in their wilful blindness and darkness. Likewise, from the above instances we may plainly see, that the present judicatories are worse, yea, vastly worse, than when the secession was at first stated and declared. Was ever
tyranny

tyranny over the consciences of men screwed higher by the church of Rome, than it is by the assembly 1737. when they declare, *That it shall not be lawful* for the synod of Perth to put any question, whether they should obey their appointment or not? Here is absolute and implicate obedience commanded with a witness. Besides, the judicatories are now worse, in regard they continue in the practice of violent intrusions, in face of a more public and more open testimony against the same, and when the sinfulness of them is now become a point of confession amongst the members of this particular visible church. I humbly judge, that it is an aggravation of the sin of the judicatories, when petitions, representations and remonstrances in a way of church communion have not reclaimed them; and that it is yet a higher aggravation of their sin, when a testimony is lifted up against the procedure in a way of secession from them, on account of the complex course of defection from the Lord, and therefore on account of violent intrusions amongst many other things that they should, notwithstanding of this, continue to oppress, break and scatter the sheep of the Lord's pasture.

4^{thly}, As if the injury done to truth by former assemblies in the affair of Mr. Simson had not been enough, Truth wounded over and over again; particularly, when the assembly 1736 dismiss Mr. Campbell from their bar. Though the scheme of dangerous principles was vented and published by him, and also defended at the bar of the said assembly; yet he is not only acquitted by the said assembly from the charge of error, and dismissed without any particular admonition given him: but one of his dangerous and destructive errors was adopted by the said assembly, as I have already observed. And likewise when at the last assembly the presbytery of Edinburgh brought unto their bar several gross principles contained in two sermons preached by doctor Wisheart, whereby Confessions of Faith in general are undermined, subscriptions to them being subtilly condemned, as great bars against a free and impartial enquiry, arising from a regard to worldly interest; as also, whereby some important articles contained in our Confession of Faith are overthrown: Yet the said assembly absolved him from the charge of error in the manner I have already mentioned. On all which accounts, the present judicatories are worse, yea, vastly worse, since the time that the protestation was entered against the assembly 1733.

5thly, If the conduct of the ministers and judicatories of
 s national church with reference to the late act of parlia-
 ment anent captain John Porteous is considered, it will ap-
 pear, that the present judicatories are worse, yea, vastly
 worse, then when the above protestation was entred. As this
 of parliament was appointed to be read by all the ministers
 this church, the first Lord's Day of every month, for the
 space of twelve months; and at the time when the church
 is assembled for the public worship of God; so the most
 part of the ministry of this church did actually read this act
 from their pulpits in one shape or another. I shall not insist
 largely upon the sinfulness and scandal of this practice, but
 only make a few remarks upon it, for confirming and illus-
 trating the present argument.

As the foresaid act of parliament contains several things
 that have no manner of foundation in the word of God, so
 the reading of the same by ministers from the pulpit, in time
 of the solemn worship of God, was a publishing the doctrines
 and commandments of men unto the church assembled toge-
 ther for hearing the voice of the great Shepherd the Lord Je-
 sus; whereby the readers of the said act profaned the Lord's
 day, exposed the office of the ministry, hardened a wicked
 generation, and grieved and stumbled many of the Lord's
 people. Likewise, the imposing of the said act to be read
 at time of divine worship, was a giving directions and instruc-
 tions unto ministers of the gospel, in the exercise of their mi-
 nisterial and spiritual function: This is indeed a branch of
 that supremacy that the powers of the earth have claimed o-
 ver the house of God, and the readers of the said act have
 humbly submitted to the same; whereby they have practically
 owned and acknowledged, that they may receive directions
 and instructions in the exercise of their ministerial functions
 from the civil powers; and consequently they have declared
 themselves the servants of men, or they have thereby declar-
 ed, that they are not regulated and governed in the exercise
 of their holy function by Jesus Christ alone, but also by the
 civil powers. If it is said, that ministers may warrantably
 yield obedience unto such commands of the civil magistrate
 as are not contrary to the word of God; no doubt they
 may and ought: Ministers are nowise exempted from sub-
 jection to the civil magistrate more as other subjects, yea,
 they ought to be patterns and examples unto all others.

of obedience and subjection to their lawful commands; in the mean time, it is only as members of the commonwealth that they are subject unto the magistrate, and not in their office as ministers, which they receive and hold from the Head of the church alone. And tho' the magistrate be guardian of both tables of the law, and may warrantably command, *that every thing in the house of the God of heaven, be done according to the will of the God of heaven*; yet he is not by vertue of his office, an interpreter unto the church of the laws of Christ: Therefore it is not his province to give instructions to ministers of the gospel in the exercise of their ministerial function, and far less to prescribe in an authoritative manner unto ministers, any laws, acts and statutes whatsoever, to be published unto the church in his own name and by his own authority. It is the peculiar province of the courts of Christ's spiritual kingdom, ministerially to declare the laws and the will of Christ the Head of the church, from the holy scriptures; and to publish the same unto the church in his name and authority, who is the only Lord and lawgiver unto his church and people.

But the penalty annexed unto the foresaid act deserves for more particular consideration. It is expressly statute, That in case any minister shall neglect to read the said act, he shall for the first offence be declared *incapable of sitting or voting in any church-judicatory*. The several writers against the reading of this act of parliament have observed, that the declaring ministers incapable of sitting and voting in any church-judicatory, is a depriving them of the exercise of a considerable branch of their ministerial office; consequently, that it is an ecclesiastical censure, and that the parliament in the foresaid penalty have assumed to themselves the power of excommunicating keys; and that this is an erastian power exercised over the church, altogether incompetent for any civil court; and that the penalties of this kind belong only unto ecclesiastical courts. And hence they argue, That the reading of the act was a sinful compliance with an erastian usurpation over the judicatories of the church. The argument has been very well managed in this shape, against the reading of the said act, by several judicious writers; therefore I shall not here further insist upon it: Only I must beg leave to add a few marks on the foresaid penalty, to illustrate the argument in hand.

When it is declared that such as neglect to read the act shall be incapable of sitting or voting in any church-judicatory, the reading of this act is made a condition and qualification of ministers their sitting and voting in church-judicatories: Hereby the parliament assume to themselves a power of appointing and determining the qualifications of such who shall have power to sit and vote in the courts of the Lord's house, or who shall be judged capable of exercising an essential part and branch of the pastoral office, namely, the exercise of the keys of government and discipline.

By the above penalty it is likewise plain, that the parliament claim to themselves a power of emitting acts, orders and constitutions concerning the constituent members of judicatories of Christ's house, and consequently concerning the constitution of ecclesiastical courts. And therefore,

By the foresaid penalty, the parliament claim to themselves a superiority over ecclesiastical judicatories as such; and, according to their foresaid statute, these are considered so far subordinate to the parliament, that they may determine who shall not be held and reputed as constituent members of these courts. Hence,

The parliament, by the same penalty, assume to themselves a power, whereby they may enact such laws and orders as may debar from church-judicatories, or from sitting and voting in them, such as have all those qualifications which give them full warrant and authority from the Lord Jesus, the Head of the church, to sit and vote in the courts of his house; and thus ecclesiastical judicatories are still so far subordinated unto the civil powers, that they may model them at their will and pleasure. If these things are duly considered, we shall find that the foresaid penalty contains the very substance and soul of the erastian supremacy, as it was asserted and declared by our Scots parliament when it was screwed up to its highest pitch, particularly by the first act of that session of parliament that met October 19th 1669, where, amongst other things, it is declared and enacted, "That the king and his successors have the supreme authority and supremacy over all persons, and in all causes ecclesiastical within this kingdom;—and that they may settle, enact

“ and emit such constitutions, acts and orders, concerning
 “ the administration of the external government of
 “ church and the persons employed in the same, and concern
 “ ing all ecclesiastical meetings and matters to be proposed
 “ and determined therein, as they in their royal wisdom
 “ think fit.” From what has been observed it may be evident, that the very same supremacy over the judicatories is upon the matter claimed by the foresaid penalty, which the Scots parliament declared and asserted to be in the person of the king and his successors; and this very supremacy was witnessed against by the Presbyterian church of Scotland in the face of the greatest tyranny and violence, in the late time of cruel persecution. Her known principles are, That the Lord Jesus Christ alone, as Mediator, is Head, Lord and Lawgiver unto his church; and that to him alone it belongs to give laws, ordinances and statutes unto the office-bearers of his house, in their several spiritual and ecclesiastical functions and administrations; and that all the courts and judicatories of his house are subordinate to him alone in their ecclesiastical functions and administrations; and that unto the Lord Jesus alone it appertains to give instructions unto his ministers, to regulate them in the exercise of their ministry, and to prescribe laws and rules concerning the meetings of their own courts and their constituent members, as also to determine the qualifications of the office-bearers of his house who have right to sit and vote in his own courts. If the courts of Christ’s house are framed and modelled according to the laws, acts and constitutions of men, as is done by the foresaid penalty, then they are no more the courts of Christ, their constitution is changed, they hold not of Christ the Head alone in their ecclesiastical meetings and administrations; and, therefore, they are thereby subordinated unto the civil powers, they are not to be reckoned ecclesiastic but civil courts. The great defence that is made against the crassian penalty annexed to the above act is, That no more is intended by it, but that such as should neglect to read the act cannot sit and vote in judicatories that have the legal establishment; or, that they thereby forfeit the legal countenance and protection; and that it is only ministers power and right of sitting and voting in church judicatories, as they enjoy it in virtue of civil statutes that can justly be understood. Thus some writers upon this subject have thought fit to express themselves; And, what

amount of this reasoning? It appears to me to be just as much as if it were said, That ecclesiastical judicatories, which are the legal establishment, may and ought to receive acts, orders and statutes from the civil powers concerning their meetings and constituent members; and consequently, that ecclesiastical judicatories, in so far as they have the legal establishment, or the authority of civil statutes on their side, are subordinate to the civil powers: And this is nothing else but to plead the legal establishment for giving up with the sovereignty and headship of the Lord Jesus over his own house, and for subjecting the courts of his spiritual kingdom unto the authority and commands of men; and in this case it were better that the church wanted the legal establishment, than to enjoy it at such a costly rate. The countenance of civil authority is not necessary to the being of the church, tho' it is indeed very profitable and useful unto her outward peaceable living, and is promised as a great outward blessing unto the church in New-Testament times, Isa. xlix. 23. and lx. 5, 10. Rev. xvii. 16. But, when is it that the countenance of civil authority is a blessing unto the church of Christ? It is when the civil power is employed for the support and defence of the office-bearers of the church in the faithful discharge of their duty, and for the protection of the courts of his kingdom in their several just rights and privileges. As the magistrate's power over the church is not privative or destructive, so, if the countenance of civil authority is pled for depriving her of the least of these rights and privileges that are given her by the exalted head, the legal establishment becomes in this case a snare and a judgment unto the church; and it is none of the least of the rights and privileges of Christ's spiritual kingdom, that the office-bearers of his house have a claim to the exercise of the keys in the name of the King of Zion, and in subordination to him alone, as the only Lord and Lawgiver unto his church and people.

From what is above observed, concerning the late act of parliament anent captain John Porteous, it is evident, that the civil powers have claimed to themselves such a superiority over the office-bearers of the house of God, in their spiritual and ecclesiastical functions and administrations, as they have thereby declared them to be subordinate unto the civil authority in their said functions and administrations: And therefore the submission that has been given by the most part of the mi-

nistry to the said erastian usurpation, must needs be confessed a submitting themselves in the exercise of their ministry to men, and a taking their holding for the exercise of the keys of government and discipline from the civil powers, whereby they have practically given up with the sole Headship and sovereignty of Christ over his spiritual kingdom, and acknowledged that the judicatories, as they enjoy the civil legal establishment, are immediately subordinate unto the civil powers, and may and ought to receive acts and orders from them concerning their ecclesiastical meetings, their constituent members, together with the qualifications of such members. Let us here also consider what has been the conduct of the judicatories of this church since the above act of parliament did take place: When, by the penalty annexed to the said act of parliament, the civil powers have plainly and expressly declared that the ecclesiastical judicatories in Scotland, by virtue of the civil or legal establishment granted unto them, are subordinate unto the civil magistrate, this was a loud call unto the judicatories to bear plain and express testimony unto the alone sovereignty and Headship of Christ over his own house, and for asserting the just rights and privileges of his spiritual kingdom, in opposition unto the above encroachment made thereupon; now was the season for such a testimony, now was the season for discharging a duty, the omission of which was justly complain'd of and regretted by many, at our wonderful deliverance from Popery, tyranny and slavery *anno* 1688. But it is to be regretted that no testimony of this kind has been given by any of the present judicatories of this national church; yea, some synods, particularly the synod of Perth and Stirling, did, at their meeting October 1737, give an ample testimony to the readers of the above act as true Presbyterians, and that they did it from a sense of duty: This was a saying a confederacy unto them of their sin, and a hardening of them in their iniquity. And at the last general assembly of this national church, which was the first that met after the imposing and reading of the said act, gave no manner of testimony against the dishonour done to the King of Zion, and the encroachment that was made upon his spiritual kingdom by the enacting and reading of the said act. Neither could any other thing be expected from them, when the most part of the constituent members of that assembly were involved in this grievous sin and scandal.

Upon the whole, since by the above-mentioned act of parliament and the reading thereof, the present judicatories of this national church, as they enjoy the civil or legal establishment, are declared and acknowledged to be subordinate unto the civil powers, and since no testimony has been offered by any of the said judicatories against this grievous encroachment on the power and authority of the King of Zion over his spiritual kingdom, it plainly follows, that this usurpation is submitted unto by the judicatories of this national church; and therefore, by their submission unto the same, their constitution is so far altered and changed, that they cannot be held and esteemed as courts that are immediately subordinate unto the King of Zion, but as courts that have changed their holding, and who have subordinated themselves to the civil powers: Hence it is evident that they are vastly worse than when the protestation was entered *anno* 1733.

A 6th instance I give is the act of the last assembly against the seceding brethren. This is an act of a very extraordinary nature; it is an act that loads the seceding brethren in a very grievous manner, without any sufficient evidence brought against them; 'tis an act that condemns their judicial act and testimony: And yet there is not one particular in it that is found or alledged to be contrary to the word of God, or the received and acknowledged principles of the church of Scotland. The charge that is laid by the said act against the seceding ministers is, That they have "seceded from the communion of this church, and made a positive separation therefrom." The evidence that is brought for the notoriety of these facts is, That representations and complaints have been laid before them concerning the said conduct of these ministers, as also "the personal knowlege of many of the ministers of the said assembly." The seceding ministers are neither afraid nor ashamed to own that they have made secession from the present judicatories of this national church; but they refuse that they have ever seceded from the communion of the church of Scotland, or that they have made any kind of separation from her. The assembly further add, That the said ministers have seceded from this church without any justifiable grounds; and that they continue in their unwarrantable secession, notwithstanding of their own solemn engagements to the contrary at their ordination &c." And further, their secession is declared to be a

schism; yea, a dangerous schism: And, in the close of the act, it is declared to be "dangerous to the peace of the church, contrary to the spirit of the gospel, very hurtful to religion and serious godliness, to Christian charity and brotherly love;" and such as adhere to the seceding brethren and their judicial act and testimony, are declared to be a company of poor deluded people. One would think that such a sentence, past by a national assembly against several ministers of the gospel, should be founded upon very clear and convincing grounds and evidences. When they declare that the present secession is without any justifiable grounds, and that the seceding ministers are deluders of the people, have they ever examined the grounds upon which the secession is stated? Either they knew them, or not. If they knew them, ought they not to have considered them and weighed them in the balances of the sanctuary? and was it not their duty to have compared them with our received and approved standards, before they had condemned the seceding ministers as counteracting their ordination-engagements, and as dangerous schismatics and deluders of the people? But to condemn them in the manner fore said, merely because they have seceded, and without enquiring into their principles, or examining the grounds of their secession according to the word of God and our approved standards, is a dealing with them by mere authority; 'tis a dealing with them in a manner that can neither convince nor persuade the consciences of men. The council of Trent, before they condemned the Protestants as schismatics excerpted out of their testimonies and writings several, of their doctrinal propositions. and made some shew of examining of them; but a national assembly of the church of Scotland, by a solemn act and sentence, condemn eight ministers as dangerous schismatics without condescending upon any erroneous principle maintained by them: They declare the grounds of their secession to be unjustifiable; but what these grounds are, they have not told. They cannot alledge, that they did not know the grounds upon which the secession is stated; for the act of assembly bears. That the Act, Declaration and Testimony of the seceding ministers, and their other papers, assign the grounds of their unreasonable and irregular conduct. And they further add, That the seceding ministers, in their said testimony and papers, do "with the air of a paramount power and authority condemn this church and the judicatories for their proceedings, and cast ma-

ny groundless and calumnious reflections upon her and them." If a general council should let go a testimony for truth, why may not a presbytery, constitute in the name of the Lord Jesus, judicially assert the truth, without assuming themselves a paramount power and authority? The councils of Arminium and Constantinople, which comprehended both the Eastern and Western churches, did, in the years 359 and 360, let slip the true faith concerning the Deity of Christ, as it was asserted and held forth by the council of Nice: But, in the year 362, an assembly of Confessors being met at Alexandria, (so Ruffin in his history designs them, *pauci numero*, &c. that is, few in number, but many on account of their soundness of the faith) decreed, that the ring-leaders of the apostasy should be cut off from the church; and that others, who renounced their error, and returned to the faith, should be received again into the bosom of the church*. Did these few Confessors assume to themselves a paramount power over all the churches of the then known world? or, were they in the wrong in their honest and faithful judicial determination? If an Oecumenick council should serve from the faith, may not one minister doctrinally bear testimony to the truth? And, if one may do it doctrinally, may not several ministers, associate together, emit a judicial testimony for truth, when the judicatories of a particular visible church either depart from the truth, or neglect a judicial testimony for the support of the same? I say, Why may not this be done, without assuming a paramount power? Is no other power but what the Lord Jesus has given to the office-bearers of his house, and it is no other power but what they are warranted by him in the case mentioned to exercise. If the judicatories of this national church had done their duty, the seceding brethren would not have had ground either for their association or for such a procedure.

The assembly having declared the seceding brethren dangerous schismatics, &c. they conclude, "That they might proceed upon these accounts in the due exercise of discipline, to appoint these separating brethren and their followers to be proceeded against and censured according to the demerit of their faults; yet, chusing rather still to treat them in the spirit of meekness, brotherly love and forbearance,

* *Hist. Ecclesiast. Lib. 1. Chap. 28.*

"ance, they enjoin all the ministers of this national church
 "as they shall have access, and especially the ministers of
 "synods and presbyteries within which these seceding
 "thren reside, to be at all pains, by conference and other
 "gentle means of persuasion, to reclaim and reduce them
 "their duty, and the communion of this church, &c." The
 assembly think fit to speak of treating the brethren in the
 spirit of meekness, brotherly love, &c. and yet at the same
 time they are condemned as dangerous schismatics, before the
 grounds of their secession are either enquired into or exami-
 ned: And therefore the conferences appointed with them, and
 upon the specious pretexs of brotherly love, and gentle means
 of persuasion, must be to this effect; *The general assembly
 of the church of Scotland have found, that you are Separated
 from this church; that your secession is unwarrantable; that
 it is without any justifiable grounds; and that you have assumed
 a paramount power and authority to yourselves, and are
 promoting a dangerous schism; that you are seducing and
 leading the people: Therefore they have appointed us to confer
 with you, in order to reclaim and reduce you to your duty
 and, if you will not be reclaimed and reduced unto your duty
 the commission are empowered to take all proper steps and
 methods for duly visiting you before the next assembly, there to
 answer for your irregular conduct and all the parts thereof.*

this to treat them in the spirit of meekness? Are these
 gentle means of persuasion? Who could expect that the
 seceding brethren would enter into conferences with any upon
 the above terms, whereby their testimony and the whole of
 their conduct is condemned as a dangerous schism, and that
 without any regard to what they might offer for their own
 vindication? I hope they are ready to give a reason of their
 hope that is in them to any that ask it; but, in the mean time
 it cannot be expected that they should act an inconsistent part
 with the testimony which they are bound in duty to hold.

I further observe, That the foresaid act against the seceding
 brethren reflects upon their appointing fasts in different parts
 of the country; and the reflection contains an indecent
 insinuation, unworthy of such a reverend body: "To which
 "fasts (say they) there is a resort of several thousands of peo-
 "sons of both sexes; and too many of them, as there is good
 "ground to think, come there with other views than to pro-
 "mote religion." Are not all our public assemblies for worshipping

de up of persons of both sexes? and is it not their duty
 resort unto them? Can any of our public assemblies for
 orship be purged of such persons, of whom there is too
 ch ground to think that they come there with other views
 an to promote religion? Yet, even many such have been
 ectually called by the word of the gospel, and made mo-
 ments of the rich and sovereign grace of God in Christ Je-
 s. As for the fasts appointed by the associate presbytery,
 ere is no doubt but that too many resort unto them with o-
 er views than to promote religion; but I hope that there
 e others that frequent them for their spiritual edification,
 d who have reason and ground to bless the Lord for such
 emn meetings.

From what I have observed upon the act of the last assem-
 y against the seceding brethren, it is evident, that it con-
 ns a general condemnation of their testimony, without
 ndescending upon any particular instances of any thing ap-
 pted by them contrary to the word of God, or the lauda-
 e acts and constitutions of the church of Scotland; yea, by
 e said act of assembly, all the proceedings of the present
 dicatories are justified, and the seceding ministers are con-
 demned as casting many groundless and calumnious reflecti-
 ns upon them in their said act and testimony, and in other
 pers emitted by them: Hence 'tis also plain, that the par-
 ticular steps of defection both of present and former times,
 ntained in the presbytery's act and testimony, are reckoned
 jurious and calumnious reflections. The present judica-
 ories then are so far from acknowledging their iniquity, and
 turning to the Lord, that they condemn the seceding mi-
 nisters for bearing testimony unto the truth; they not only
 fuse to lift up a judicial testimony for truth themselves, but
 ey condemn others who are endeavouring to do it: There-
 ore I cannot but look upon this procedure as an instance
 at they are worse than when the protestation was entred
 gainst the assembly 1733. And, from all the above parti-
 ular instances that I have given, the author of the Essay
 ay see that the present judicatories are worse, yea, vastly
 orse, than when the said protestation was entred: As also,
 e may see, that the grounds of secession from the present
 dicatories, as the same was stated before the commission
 f the general assembly 1733, do still subsist; and that the
 rocedure of the judicatories from time to time has been such,

as not only gives just ground for the seceding brethren to continue in their secession, but also to enlarge the same further than it was stated before the commission of the general assembly *anno* 1733.

I shall only further observe upon the present proceedings of the judicatories, That having thrust out from communion with them some ministers, because they were contending with the said judicatories against several steps of defection; these ministers judged it their duty to associate together, that they might testify in a judicial capacity for the truths of God; as also, that they might contribute their endeavours, in the same capacity, for the help and relief of the Lord's oppressed heritage thro' the land: And now the judicatories will have them to return again to their communion; and, if they will not, they threaten to process and libel them, that is, they will have them forced back again into their communion, even tho' the grounds of their secession are so far from being removed, that, in all the above particular instances named, the said grounds are strengthened and increased. I may therefore leave it to any unbiassed person to judge if this is either a consistent or reasonable procedure.

I shall now conclude this section with laying before the reader a short sum of the argument for secession from the present judicatories, and for the exercise of the keys in a distinct capacity from them, as I have stated and laid the same in this chapter, *viz.* This national church, as she is represented in her judicatories, is not a confessing church; she has not the scripture character of the church of the living God; in regard her judicatories refuse to do justice to truth, in condemning particularly and expressly many gross and pernicious errors that have been brought to their bar, whereby the scheme of divine truth laid down from the word of God in our Confession of Faith is subverted; as also, in regard the erroneous have been dismissed from their bar, either without censure, or with no censure proportioned to the scandal and offence they have given. In like manner, the said judicatories are tyrannical in their administration, and that not in a few single instances only, but in a series and tract of violence done unto the heritage of God; whereby they not only obstruct ministers upon the church, but even appoint the right hand of fellowship to be given to intruders, by such synods and presbyteries as have been reclaiming against such violence

and likewise they appoint and ordain, that the members of the church should submit to the ministry of those that are imposed upon them, as if they were lawful and sent ministers of Christ, or otherwise be deprived of the seals of the covenant. And further, this tyranny in the administration is manifested in several acts and deeds, whereby sinful and unwarrantable terms of ministerial and Christian communion have been laid down, and the judicatories of the church do still persist in refusing to do justice to injured truth, as also in their tyranny in the administration: And, of late, the most part of ministers having actually submitted unto such usurpations of the civil powers, whereby the courts and judicatories of the Lord's house are held and declared to subsist and stand in a direct subordination unto the said powers; and the present judicatories having given no manner of testimony at all against the said grievous usurpation, but having continued with a silent submission under the same, their constitution is thereby changed, and they have virtually consented to take their holding, with respect to the disposal and ordering of their constituent members and their qualifications, directly and immediately of the civil powers: And further, the said judicatories have and do persist and continue in the above and the like sinful practices, notwithstanding the ordinary means have been used to reclaim them, particularly by petitions, representations, dissents and protestations against many of the above practices complained of; by all which they have departed from our received and approved standards of doctrine, worship, government and discipline, and consequently have broke the bond of ecclesiastical union in this particular visible church: Therefore a secession from ecclesiastical conjunction and communion with the present judicatories is necessary duty, ay, and until they return to our reformation-standards; and such as are sensible of their duty, and who desire to be sound faithful to the Lord in this day of degeneracy and backsliding, have right on their side, both from the word of God and from the acts and constitutions of this church, from our solemn covenant-engagements, and from the engagements that each minister comes under at his ordination to the ministry, by all which they are bound to hold fast what we in this reformed church and land have received; as also, in regard they cannot otherwise discharge several duties that their

station

station and office oblige them unto, and which the present state of the church of Christ in this land requires, they have right, I say, to associate together in a distinct judicative capacity from the present judicatories, that they may display the banner of a testimony for the truths of Christ, for the freedom of his spiritual kingdom, and the rights of his subjects in opposition to the injury that is done to truth, to the injuries that are made upon his spiritual kingdom, and the violence that is done to his subjects; and this, as a debt that she owes to her God, and as a branch of that revenue of glory and praise that is due from the church unto her exalted Head, and as a public debt that she ought to discharge for the sake of the present and succeeding generations.

It is to be regretted, that such is the state of matters in the judicatories of this national church, that I have so much ground for laying my argument in the above manner against them; I have been obliged unto it, for the defence of the cause which I doubt not is the cause of truth, and which the associate presbytery, whereof I am a member, have by their judicial act and testimony espoused. I have in this, and in the preceding sections, endeavoured to explain and give reasons for the verity and truth of the several particulars contained in the above charge: And it is with some measure of concern that I find the conclusion which comes out from the several premisses that I have laid down may be expressed in the following terms, *viz.* Since the present judicatories of this national church refuse to confess the truths of God in direct opposition unto such dangerous errors whereby they have been subverted; and since, by several particular acts and deeds, they are tyrannical in their administration; and since they are constituted of such members as are obtruded upon the church, and therefore have no right nor warrant from the Head of the church to sit in his courts, nor to rule and govern his flock, yea, constituted of such members who are scattering the flock of Christ, and ruling over them with force and rigour, by which and the like practices they have given scandal and offence to the church of God; as also, since the said judicatories have, by their silent submission unto the usurpations that have been made upon the kingdom of Christ and the courts thereof, virtually and practically given countenance with their holding of the King of Zion, whereby the constitution of the several judicatories of this national church is changed

anged; and finally, since they continue to justify themselves these and the like practices: Therefore, for the above, and for all the other reasons that have been more particularly specified and expressed, the present judicatories of this national church cannot be held nor reputed as lawful or right constitute courts of Christ; and consequently it is the duty of such as desire to be found faithful to the Lord to come out from among them, and to make use of the keys of government and discipline for the ends and purposes for which they are given to the office-bearers of the church by her glorious and exalted Head. And, in like manner, it is the duty of all who are under the Lord thro' the land, and who desire to hold fast that reformation purity once attained unto, stedfastly to adhere to any testimony emitted by such office-bearers, for the glory of God, and against a course of defection and deviation from them, whether in present or former times; the command being given to all the members of the church, according to their different spheres and stations, to *stand fast in one spirit, with one mind, striving together for the faith of the gospel*, Phil. i. 27.



C H A P. III.

Wherein the Arguments advanced by the Author of the Essay against Secession from the present Judicatories, are examined.

THE author of the Essay proceeds in his fifth chapter to give us what he calls his weighty arguments against secession; but, since he has never distinctly stated the question, I cannot expect to find that his arguments shall be laid out in a fair or plain manner: Sometimes they seem to be levelled against the Sectarian Separatists, sometimes against a book intitled *Plain Reasons*, &c. But, since in his title-page he states seceding brethren as his only adversaries, I shall consider his arguments as directed against the conduct of the associate assembly, whom he thinks fit to class with the worst schismatics and Separatists. In his preamble to his arguments

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In the beginning of the fifth chapter, "Separation (says he) from a true church, except in the above or like cases, was always reckoned a heinous sin by the judicious and the pious, albeit her faults should be many." I have already noticed the ambiguity in the terms, *true church*, as used by him. By the *above and like cases*, he means the cases mentioned in his fourth chapter, where he mentions six general grounds of separation: And I have likewise observed, that it is neither distinct nor plain upon any of them, except upon the fifth, when he tells us, p. 35. "That such ministers who are evidently scandalous may be withdrawn from, albeit thro' the iniquity of the times, they should not be censured by a church-judicatory, when complained of." And here I might ask our author, Whether or not such are evidently scandalous, who have an active hand in obtruding ministers upon the church, or who have practically given up with the sole Headship and sovereignty of Christ over his spiritual kingdom, or who have pled that self-interest must be the sway in all our actions whatsoever; Whether or not, say, such persons are evidently scandalous; or if they have given just ground of offence unto the church and people of God? If our author will grant that they are scandalous, then how is he consistent with himself, in continuing to maintain ecclesiastical communion with them, when, thro' the iniquity of the times, they are not censured by a church-judicatory tho' they have been often complained of? I know not what our author reckons *evidently scandalous*; but I doubt not to affirm, that such as are guilty of an open and public violation of several express commands of the first table of the moral law, and who justify themselves in the same, are equally scandalous, and more dangerous to the church, as these, who may be guilty of the open violation of the express commands of the second table of the same law, tho' the latter ought likewise to be censured by every church-judicatory.

The author of the Essay is likewise plain upon his first general ground of separation, *viz.* "That the imposing the least sinful term of communion is just ground of separation from a church." I have already evinced, that unwarrantable and sinful terms of communion are by several acts and deeds imposed upon the ministers and members of this church; as also, that our conjunction with the present judicatories do in itself bind us up from the discharge of several duties which

ministerial office and our ordination vows and engagements do oblige us unto, in the present state of matters in the national church. I might therefore pass over all our author's arguments, as nowise affecting the present question betwixt the present judicatories and the seceding ministers; in regard his divine and human authorities, though very much misapplied, are yet industriously managed to the prejudice of the cause of truth, I shall briefly consider them, as I have noticed what he mentions in his preamble, concerning the emperor Constantine who (he tells us) was so affected with the dissensions of the church in his day, that he brought many a tear from his eyes, and robbed him of his night's rest. As the Arian heresy was the occasion of these great dissensions of the church in Constantine's time, so, if the injuries that have been done to the person of Christ in our times, and the injuries that have been done to many important precious truths, had drawn tears from the eyes of ministers and other church-members, the banner of a judicial testimony had been displayed long ere now by the judicatories, in injured and wounded truth, after the example of the council of Nice, which was assisted and countenanced by that emperor. As for Mr. King's dying exhortation in the words of the apostle, Phil. ii. 3. as our author joins him in, so I hope all the seceding ministers do in like manner cordially join the same. I proceed now to consider our author's arguments against secession in the following sections.

S E C T. I.

Wherein the Scripture-arguments against Secession from the present Judicatories are considered.

THE first argument advanced by the author of the Essay, p. 39. to prove the unwarrantableness of separation from what he reckons a true church is, "That it is against the practice of all the saints under the Old Testament, who, notwithstanding the corruptions of priests and people, never separated, so as to erect a new church, or a new altar; and who never separated from the worship of the true God, whatever were the corruptions of the church." And he proceeds to give instances of Zacharias the priest, Mary, An-

the prophets, as also of our blessed Lord, and his apostles, who all continued in communion with the Jewish church notwithstanding of her corruptions. I have observed in a postscript to the printed letter, that this argument proves much, even more than our author himself will own; namely That we ought to submit to gospel-ordinances dispensed by men grossly immoral in their walk and practice; for such were some of the Jewish priests, in these degenerate times that our author mentions. But the author of the Essay delivers his opinion very plainly upon this head, when he tells us, as we have noticed above, Essay, p. 35: That "such as are evidently scandalous may be withdrawn from, albeit, though the iniquity of the times, they should not be censured by a church-judicatory when complained of." And here we may leave it to our author, to reconcile what he himself allows to be a ground of separation, with his first scripture-argument according to the way that he has thought fit to follow it. Tho' I humbly judge I have said enough, to take off the force of the above argument, in my postscript to which I refer, yet I shall add, That, if the said argument is laid again our secession from the present judicatories, his reasonings he lays them amount to this, All the saints under the Old Testament, notwithstanding of the corruptions of the Jewish church, never separated; so as to erect a new church, or new altar, or to worship any other than the true God; therefore, if we depart from communion with the present judicatories, we erect a new church, or a new altar, and separate from the worship of the true God. But, who may not see the absurdity of this reasoning? Our author's argument would indeed be strong, if he was able to confine the church and worship of God to the present judicatories, as of old the only place of their solemn worship was the temple, and the national church of the Jews was the only visible church upon the face of the earth; yea, the church was confined to that nation from the time at least that the law was given from mount Sinai, to the rearing up of the New-Testament church, after the resurrection of our Lord from the dead; and Jerusalem or the temple, was the instituted and appointed place of solemn worship unto the whole church: But now it is no more the seat or place of worship; the prophecy has long ago taken its accomplishment, Mal. i. 11. *For from the rising of the sun even unto the going down of the same, my name shall be great among*

among the Gentiles, and in every place incense shall be offered to my name, and a pure offering. The visible church is now confined to one nation, but consists of all these throughout the world that profess the true religion: Hence it is evident, that when we depart from church-communion with a particular visible church, whether provincial or national, on account of her corruptions and backslidings, we depart not from the church, nor from the ordinances of divine institution; our secession is, in this case, a cleaving more closely to the only New-Testament altar Christ Jesus, and to the ordinances of his institution; it is not a departure from the church, but from the corrupt and depraved part of the catholic body: and, in this, we follow the example of the prophets and saints under the Old Testament, and of our blessed Lord and his apostles, who departed from the corruptions of the Jewish church, but at the same time did cleave to the church, and to the ordinances of worship that were of divine institution and appointment. If it were duly observed, that the catholic church is but one body, and that the ordinances are given primarily to the church catholic visible, and that every particular church is but a part of this one body, and that the secession pled for is a secession only from a corrupt and depraved part of the catholic body; it would plainly appear, that the practice of the seceding ministers is conform to the practice of the prophets and saints under the Old Testament, who departed from the corruptions of the Jewish church, but at the same time remained stedfast in their observance of the ordinances of divine institution and appointment. I shall now add upon this head, That the Papists have stated the argument from the Old-Testament church, against the secession of the Protestant churches from them, after the same manner as the author of the Essay does against his Separatists: and, if he is pleased to consult the learned Turretine, our author may see his first argument against separation stated in the very same manner by the Papists from the practice of the prophets and saints in the Old-Testament church, against the secession of the Protestants from the church of Rome; and, amongst other answers given by that learned divine, he may see, that he takes notice of the vast disparity betwixt the church of the church under the Old and New Testament in the above particulars I have named, *Disp. 2. Sect. 4. 6. Disp. 8. Sect. 25, 26.*

Our author, p. 41. tells us, That "our Lord enjoined
 " the people to hear them that sat in Moses' seat." He does
 not mention the scripture; I judge he intends Matth. xxiii.
 2, 3. *The Scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat; and
 therefore whatsoever they bid you observe, that observe and do; but do not ye after their works.* Our author cannot but
 know, that this scripture has been pled for joining in com-
 munion with Prelatic Conformists; and he cannot but like-
 wise know what the worthy authors quoted by him, as
 the *Hind-let-loose*, and Mr. Forester in his *Reclius instructum*
 have said upon the subject. But, in regard this place of
 scripture has been very much perverted and abused, I shall
 here transcribe what a worthy divine, whom our author fre-
 quently cites, has with a great deal of judgment observed
 upon it, viz. Mr. Hogg in his *Casistical Essay*, p. 71.
 " I sincerely judge (says he) that our Lord Jesus did not
 " command or allow to hear the Pharisaical teachers of the
 " period, nor such as they were in any age; for when I
 " seriously ponder (as before the Lord) how clearly and point-
 " edly their gross ignorance, and perversions of the great
 " fundamentals both of law and gospel are decyphered in the
 " word, their bitter and implacable hatred, and violent per-
 " suading of the Messias, whom they persecuted to the utmost
 " even against their own consciences, (wherein at least few
 " of them committed *the unpardonable sin*) together with
 " the pains (may I so express it) which our Lord had taken
 " on all occasions to detect them unto the people, with
 " many cautions he gives to *beware of them, and to take heed
 " lest they should be infected with the poisonous leaven of their
 " doctrine, and hypocritical pageantry*; and add to this
 " woes he pronounceth against them in the course of his do-
 " ctrine almost at every turn, and the whole clusters which
 " once he heapeth on them, and more so to this purpose, which
 " the gospel-history representeth; I cannot reconcile these
 " strong and patheticall dissuasives with an allowance to con-
 " tenance the administrations of such of them who taught
 " publicly, especially for that we are expressly prohibited
 " *to hear the instruction which causeth to err from the word of
 " knowledge*; and the poisonous plague of heretical doctrine
 " and teachers is still to be evited, chiefly when the whole
 " mass is corrupt, and scarce any thing left entire (as in the
 " present case) and that it is both required of Christ's disci-
 " ples

and commended as a property peculiar to them, from a supernatural and saving instinct, to put difference betwixt Christ's voice and the voice of a stranger; as also not to follow, but to flee from, these strangers." The same worthy author proceeds to explain the above words, Matth. xiii. 2, 3. and he reckons that, according to the original, they may be translated indicatively; but, in regard he does not insist upon this interpretation, I shall transcribe the commentary he gives us upon them, in his letters frequently cited by our author, p. 35. where he says, "I doubt not but that the Scribes and Pharisees were teachers, and, as such, I firmly believe they were not to be heard, because they were heretics, and for other weighty reasons before-mentioned. The command is very express, Prov. xix. 27. *Cease, my son, to hear the instruction that causeth to err from the words of knowledge.* Notwithstanding these Scribes and Pharisees were also rulers, and members of the great Jewish council, and in this sense were considered in a legislative capacity. This is that capacity wherein I think they are said (by our Lord Jesus) *to sit in Moses' seat*; for, whatever other dignities Moses was invested with, he is mainly considered and held forth in scripture as a lawgiver, John i. 17. *The law was given by Moses*; and on this account it is, I would judge, and do tender it with all due respect to great divines otherwise minded, that the sitting in Moses' seat appeareth to imply authority and power, at least executive of these laws which the Lord gave by Moses. This exposition, tho' not ordinary, yet seems native, plain and easy, and taketh off all grounds of exception I know; seeing we have no cause to doubt but that obedience was at that time due to the Jewish Sanhedrim, in so far as they enjoined nothing but that which the Lord had before commanded by Moses." It is plain that the Scribes and Pharisees may well be considered as civil rulers; and in this capacity, as they were interpreters and executors of the judicial law given by Moses, so obedience was due unto their lawful commands. I shall only further add upon this head, That as there is a great difference betwixt sitting in Moses' seat, who was king in Jeshurun, and a civil lawgiver to that people, and sitting in Aaron's seat, who was an ecclesiastical officer; so it is most agreeable to the analogy of scripture, to understand the above words to respect the Scribes

and Pharisees as civil judges or rulers. And the worthy vine that I have named is not singular in this sentiment; I find that Mr. Forester tells his adversary, who pled the scripture, Matth xxiii. 2, 3. for communion with Prelate Conformists, "That these Pharisees might be civil doctors and interpreters of Moses's judicial law, and of Israel's municipal law, from his civil chair, who was king in shurun; which will no more infer a hearing them teach and preach as church officers, than our obedience unto the king, council, parliament and session, will infer that conclusion."

The author of the Essay proceeds to argue against separation, from the state of several eminent churches erected by the apostles: He observes, p. 41, 42. That many things were amiss in these churches, yet that we never read of any thing like separation enjoined; particularly, that in the church of Corinth many faults of a heinous nature were tolerated, and not duly censured; and that in the church of Galatia many had departed from him who had called them to the grace of Christ, unto another gospel; that Ephesus had fallen from her first love; and that Pergamos had such in her communion, that held the doctrine of Balaam, &c. and that the church of Thyatira suffered the wicked woman Jezebel to seduce Christ's servants, &c. From all the above instances, our author concludes, p. 43. "If all these were true churches, then may a church with many faults and many corruptions remain a true church of Christ, with a lawful and visible ministry, and for all these faults and corruptions cannot be separated from." But, if the reader will consider what we have already observed, he will find that our author's above conclusion is laid in very deceitful and ambiguous terms. If he would form the argument, from the state of the churches he mentions, against the conduct of the seceding brethren, his conclusion should run in the following terms, That it is unlawful and unwarrantable for the smaller part of a church when the majority are in their judicative capacity carrying on a course of defection, and refuse to be reclaimed, to exercise the keys of government and discipline for the maintenance of truth: But none of the instances that our author gives, can support him in this conclusion, in regard he cannot prove that any of the churches he mentions carried on a course of defection in their judicative capacity, neither can he prove that

they despised the reproofs and admonitions that were given
 om. I have already observed, that the church of Corinth
 submitted to reproofs and admonitions given her by the
 apostle in his first epistle, and that *they had sorrowed after a
 godly sort*, and therefore were a reforming church; and I have
 likewise evinced, that the admonitions, warnings and direc-
 tions, given in the several epistles directed to the churches,
 clearly point out the duty of the smaller part of the office-
 bearers of a church, if we should suppose the majority of the
 office-bearers should decline, or obstinately refuse to discharge
 their duty. But, if our author will still push his argument
 from the state of the churches of Corinth and Galatia, then
 we must say, Tho' the resurrection of the dead should be de-
 nied in a church, an error which, the apostle declares, sub-
 verts the whole doctrine of Christianity, 1 Cor. xv. 13, 14.
 and tho' the gospel of Christ should be perverted, and the
 second article of justification should be overthrown, and tho'
 this should be professed, avowed and tolerate in a church,
 yet she is still such a true church, as we must not separate
 from her, and are obliged to hold ecclesiastical communion
 therewith, even when she declines or refuses to testify parti-
 cularly or expressly against such gross and dangerous errors:
 at this rate of reasoning, our secession from the church of
 Rome, as it was stated upon her doctrinal articles, and espe-
 cially upon the article of justification, which was reckoned
 the principal doctrinal point upon which our reformers stated
 their secession; at this rate, I say, it must be condemned.
 And, if our author thinks fit to consult Turretine on the head
 of secession, he will likewise find, that the Popish doctors
 have argued from the state of the churches of Corinth and
 Galatia, against the secession of the reformed churches from
 them; and, I humbly judge, it may be evident from what is a-
 bove observed, that, according to our author's way of reasoning
 against his Separatists, the argument, as it is managed by the
 church of Rome, stands in its full force and strength against
 the Protestant churches.

As for the churches of Asia, particularly Pergamos and
 Thyatira, I have fully examined the argument, as it is laid
 against the conduct of the seceding brethren, from the state
 of these churches in the printed letter, to which I refer.
 Since our author has mentioned the church of Ephesus as a
 church that had many corruptions, I must observe, that this

church did hold fast, by external visible profession, the pur she had once attain'd; yea, she was so faithful in her judi tive capacity, she tried and censured the erroneous, *Thou canst not bear them which are evil, and thou hast tried them which say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars*, Rev. ii. 3, 4. This is a commendation that this national church, as she is represented in her present judicatories has not any claim or title unto. That for which Ephesus was condemned and threatned, ver. 4, 5. is, that the grace of love, that inward animating and influencing principle, which powerfully and sweetly constrains unto obedience, was more cool and languid than at her first conversion from Paganism to Christianity.

The author of the Essay, p. 62, 63, &c. argues against separation, according to his way of stating the question, as a sin against the command of the great God our Saviour, Heb. x. 25. as opposite to the commands of union and brotherly love, 1 Cor. i. 10. John xiv. 34. as contrary to the design of Christ's death, Eph. ii. 14, — 16. as a sin against the intercession of Christ, John xvii. 11. as that which is hurtful and fatal to the church, which tends vastly to the hurt of religion, and which hath a direct tendency to mar the success of the glorious gospel: He concludes, That separation is commonly said to be a renting of Christ's seamless coat, and includes sundry other evils in it; and therefore the apostle is so pathetic in pressing unity, Eph. iv. 1, 2, 3, &c. Phil. i. 1, 2. The author may enlarge as much as he pleases in condemning separation, and in commending union, as his reverend brother the author of a paper called the *Seasonable Testimony* has done before him, in a flow of words, without ever stating the question or argument. I humbly judge, I have equal reason to say, That union and conjunction with declining and backsliding judicatories, to the prejudice of suitable and necessary testimony for truth and against dangerous errors and public national steps of defection, or which involves the office bearers of the church in the omission or neglect of any duties that their office does oblige them unto, and which I have proven to be the union and conjunction that our author pleads for with the present judicatories of this national church; an union and conjunction of this kind I say, is contrary unto the express command of the great Head of the church, Jude 3. *Contend earnestly for the faith*

delivered unto the saints. It is contrary to one special
 and design of the Son of God's coming into the world;
came to bear witness to the truth, John xviii. 37. he wit-
 nessed a good confession before Pontius Pilate, 1 Tim. vi. 13.
 and he sealed his testimony and witness with his death: Has
 not, in all this, left us a pattern that we should follow?
 are we not under the strongest obligations, from his dying
 for us, to bear witness and testimony unto his truths, when
 any of them are controverted or opposed, and that in every
 situation and capacity in which we are placed? Ought not there-
 fore, such as are office-bearers in his house, who desire to be
 true and faithful unto him, when the keys are perverted or a-
 bused by a majority, make use of them for asserting and main-
 taining the declarative honour and glory of the Redeemer?
 and ought not all the members of the church, who desire to
 prove themselves unto the Lord, in a day of sinning and
 backsliding, adhere to any testimony lifted up for truth, and
 against a course of sin and defection? Again, the above union
 and conjunction that is pled for is contrary unto our blessed
 Lord's intercessory prayer, John xvii. The character that
 there gives of his disciples is, that they have kept his Fa-
 ther's word, ver. 6. He prays that they might be sanctified
 thro' the truth, ver. 17. He prays for their union and con-
 junction in the truth, ver. 21. *that they all may be one in us.*
 Likewise, the union and conjunction pled for is a saying *A*
federacy with these who are carrying on a course of defec-
 tion; it has a native tendency to harden them in their sin, in
 regard they may thereby justly conclude, that the offence or
 scandal which they give is not of such moment as to make
 depart from ministerial communion with them. Also, the
 above union is hurtful to the souls of men; it is hurtful to
 those with whom we unite, in so far as it is hardning unto
 them in their sin: It leaves such as are groaning under the
 burden of unsent ministers, without suitable help and relief;
 in regard it puts us out of capacity of giving ministers unto
 them with their own call and consent, according to the divine
 pattern and institution; and thereby many thro' the land have
 famine of the word of the Lord. Finally, such an union
 and conjunction as is pled for is prejudicial to posterity; it
 hinders us up from transmitting unto them such a testimony as
 is necessary unto the doctrine, worship, government and dis-
 cipline

cipline of our Lord's house, in a day of defection and sliding. It is true, peace, union, harmony, are all good words; division, separation, &c. have a hateful and frightful sound: But, what is the unity that we ought to pursue? Is it not the unity of the Spirit? Eph. iv. 3. And, what is the unity of the Spirit? The holy Spirit is the Spirit of truth; he is not a spirit of error; he is the Spirit of wisdom and understanding in the fear of the Lord, and not of carnal wisdom nor carnal policy; he is a Spirit of counsel and guidance; he is not a spirit of slavish fear or cowardice; he inspires a holy resolution and courage for God, and the things of God; for the honour of the Redeemer's person, and for the glory of all his offices, for the rights of his royal crown, and the privileges of his spiritual kingdom. And in these things we are to be of one accord, and of one mind, namely, in seeking the things of Christ, even the honour and glory of him whom God hath highly exalted, and to whom he hath given a name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, Phil. ii. 2, 5, 9, 10.

S E C T. II.

Wherein the human Authorities advanced by the Author of the Essay, against Secession from the present Judicatorium, are examined.

I Proceed now to take under consideration the human Authorities, or the testimonies of great and eminent divines adduced by the author of the Essay, against what he calls separation. It is needful that I should here acquaint the reader, that he may be able to form a just judgment upon the part of our author's testimonies, with an observe that Bailie makes, in his *Dissuasive from the Errors of the Times* p. 10. When the work of reformation was going on successfully, by the ministry of these eminent instruments whom the Lord raised up to bring the churches out of Anti-christian Babylon; amongst the many stratagems whereby Satan perverted the progress of reformation-work, there were considerable ones. "In our flight (says he) from Rome" he got some persuaded to stand too soon, before they "passed the territories of the whore, and the line

er communication: Others he wrought to the contrary
 ersivation, he made them run on too long, not only to
 the utmost line of error, but also far beyond all the bounds
 both of charity and truth; hence our greatest woes: All
 our discords and mutual wounds have sprung from these two
 mountains." Amongst the first he reckons Luther and his
 followers, as also the first instruments of reformation in Eng-
 land, who he observes, kept more correspondence with their
 assistance in higher Germany, than with Calvin and the
 French divines; and, tho' they did not follow Luther in the
 doctrine of the sacrament, yet retained so much of Rome in
 worship and discipline, as has been the occasion of all
 woful divisions which have rent our bowels, and of grie-
 vous persecutions which have undone many. As for the o-
 pportunist, who hindered the progress of reformation by run-
 ning on too far; these were the German anabaptists, who at
 their first appearance had a very great shew of piety and de-
 votion, but in a short time they proceeded to the greatest ex-
 travagancies: However, some of their peculiar and distinguish-
 ing principles were embraced in England by one Robert
 Brown, first a schoolmaster, and afterward a preacher near
 London: He wrote in defence of the principles he espoused,
 but afterwards recanted them, and received a parsonage at
 the hand of a bishop; but such as adopted his principles
 were ordinarily after him called Brownists. The learned
 Mr. I have mentioned, gives in his second chapter a large
 account of their doctrines and principles; I shall only men-
 tion some few of them. They affirmed, That, in order to
 admission unto church-membership, it was necessary that one
 should give satisfaction to the whole church of his real sanc-
 tification and true regeneration; and that not only the office-
 rers, but that all and every member of the church, was
 judge of the qualifications of such as should be admitted
 church members. They likewise affirmed, That if any who
 wanted the above qualifications should be admitted to church
 worship, or to partake in the sacraments, he should quick-
 ly pollute the whole church, that every member there-
 of must needs become partaker of his sin; and if, upon ad-
 monition, the church did not excommunicate him, they ought
 to be separated from, as an infected or leprous society: They
 acknowledged no power of jurisdiction in any ecclesiastical
 authority, above a congregational church. They rejected
 Catechisms,

Catechisms, as set and unlawful forms of instruction. affirmed, That the Christian magistrate had no right to meddle at all with any matters of religion; and they pleaded universal toleration, under the specious pretence of liberty of conscience. And severals of the followers of the first Anabaptists came the length to run down the ordinance of preaching, and to cry down the office of the holy ministry; and it is very well known to what heights they proceeded, and how many different sects they were divided, in the time of Cromwel's usurpation. Against the above extravagant principles our reformed divines imployed their pens, and discovered the contrariety of them to the holy scriptures, and their affinity to severall of the gross principles of the antient Deists and Novatians. The above are the principles that the most part of our divines, cited by the author of the Essay, do reason against; and the principles of the seceding ministers are as far distant from them as East from West. They never reckoned that the personal defects, blemishes or faults of fellow-worshippers did pollute the ordinances to others, or render them partakers in their sins; neither have they justified their secession upon any such bottom: But they have justified their secession upon a course of defection, carried on by a church in her ecclesiastic capacity, from steps of reformation once attained unto. They do not plead for positive signs of regeneration, as a necessary qualification of church membership; they agree with the reformed churches, that a credible profession of the faith, with an outward subjection unto the ordinances of the gospel, is all that the holy scriptures require in order unto church-membership. They agree with all our reformed divines, and regard the acts and constitutions of the church of Scotland, which require, in order to full communion with the church in all her sealing ordinances, the three following qualifications as necessary, viz. A profession of the truth, with a competent measure of knowledge; a life and conversation without scandal; and subjection unto the order and discipline of the church. Again, the seceding ministers do not unchurch any of the Protestant churches; they do not reckon them Antichristian synagogues: yet I hope the author of the Essay, if he is consistent with his Presbyterian character and profession, will not differ from them when they say, That there are some Protestant churches so corrupted both in their government, worship and discipline, that they

not hold communion with them. Upon the whole, As secession from the present judicatories proceeds upon none of the above-mentioned principles, but upon quite different grounds, I might here leave our author to boast of his testimonies from great men as much as he pleases; but I shall introduce a few of them, and shew that they no way affect the question, in its true state, betwixt the present judicatories and the seceding ministers.

The great Calvin is amongst the first who is adduced by our author, Essay p. 3. as also he is cited, p. 41. The first quotation from Calvin is, " That wherever there is the pure preaching of the word, and the pure administration of the sacraments, we may safely embrace that for a true church; and (says he) we are never to reject the society thereof as long as these remain, albeit otherwise it abound with many corruptions. Yea (adds he) some corruptions in the administration of doctrine or sacraments may creep in, which ought not to alienate us from her communion *." The Latin word which Calvin makes use of, and which our author renders *corruptions*, is *vitium*; and I humbly judge our author's translation is too strong; The word properly signifies *faults, defects or blemishes*; accordingly I find that Mr Norwood, in his translation of Calvin, renders it *faults*, and *faults*. But passing this, the very same testimony from Calvin is objected unto the dissenters from the church of England by doctor Stillingfleet; and I may make the same observation upon it, which doctor Owen makes in his reply to Stillingfleet, Enq. p. 287. " There is a great deal more belongs unto the pure preaching of the word, and the administration of the sacraments according unto Christ's institution, than some seem to apprehend; they may, they ought to be so explained, as that, from the consideration of them, we may justify our whole cause: Both these may be wanting in a church which is not guilty of such heinous errors in doctrine, or idolatry in worship, as should destroy its being." I have said what I reckon sufficient concerning the above characters which Calvin gives of a true church, and therefore shall not here insist upon them. But whereas our author tells us from Calvin, That we are never to reject the society of the church as long as these remain, albeit otherwise it abound with

With many corruptions, or rather, as the word should be rendered, with many faults or blemishes: Since Calvin set himself in that same place, in the caution which he forbids, and which our author does not think fit to notice, I judge it deserves a room here; *Hic autem patrocinari, &c.* i. e. "I would not have it thought that I here intend to patronize errors, even the most minute, as if I judged that they should be cherished, either by flattery or connivance; but I judge a church is not to be rashly forsaken for any trifling differences, in which only that doctrine is retained safe and incorrupted, wherein the safety of godliness consists, and the use of sacraments as appointed of the Lord is preserved." And in this all the seceding ministers will readily agree with him. This eminent divine proceeds to lay the arguments of his following sections against the Anabaptists in his own words, whom he compares to the ancient Cathari and Donatists; he charges them with inconsiderate zeal, who departed from the communion of the church, and reckoned such to be churches at all, where they observed such blemishes in the walk and conversation of professors unsuitable unto their Christian profession; and, having in very pathetic terms bewailed the unholiness of professors, he adds, *Allegant ecclesiam esse sanctam esse, &c.* i. e. "They alledge that the church is holy; but, that they may also know that it is mingled of good and evil men, let them hear this parable from the mouth of Christ, wherein the church is compared to a net, wherein fishes of all kinds are gathered, and the separation is not made till they are brought unto the shore; let them also hear, that the church is like a field wherein good seed is sown, but thro' the fraud of the enemy it is mixed with tares, from which it is not purged till the harvest it is brought into the barn-floor. Finally, let them hear, that it is like unto a floor, wherein the wheat is gathered together, that it lies hid under the chaff, and is cleansed with fan and sieve, and at length laid up in the garner." Likewise in the other citation given us from Calvin, Essay, p. 41. He argues against the same principles of the Anabaptists, and improves some words from Cyprian against them, viz. "Let no man challenge to himself that which belongs to the Son of God only, to be able alone to fan the floor, and cleanse the chaff, &c."

for our worthy countrymen, Masters Rutherford, Gil-
 e and Durham, who wrote at the time when the above
 rian principles were prevailing in England, and forcing
 y for themselves into Scotland; All the reasonings of these
 ent men in the places alledged by our author, are ex-
 y laid against the above extravagant principles. As for
 nce, Mr. Rutherford's *Peaseable Plea*, cited Essay, p.
 t, 42, &c. This book was wrote in defence of the doc-
 of our reformed divines anent church-communion: And
 argument as it is managed by Mr. Rutherford, from the
 of the church of Corinth, cited Essay. p. 42. concludes
 e following exprefs terms; "Then it is unlawful to se-
 rate from the pure worship of God, because a church is
 ot constitute of visible saints and a people all taught of
 od *." As Mr. Rutherford is here pleading against po-
 signs of regeneration as a necessary qualification of church-
 bership, so all the seceding ministers join with him; but
 author thinks fit to set his thumb upon the above con-
 on of Mr. Rutherford's argument, otherwise his reader
 t have easily perceived that Mr. Rutherford's testimony
 e in the least against the principles or conduct of the se-
 g ministers. As for Mr. Rutherford's *Due Right*, cited
 , p. 3, 9, 10. &c. This excellent book (as our author
 owleges, Pref. p. 8.) is writ against the Independents;
 he separation that Mr. Rutherford argues against, thro'
 book, is a separation stated from churches that are not
 titute in the manner I have just now mentioned: And
 fore all our author's citations from that book are nowise
 e purpose. The judicious Mr. Durham upon scandal is
 ife frequently cited, as Essay p. 19, 41, &c. particular-
 art 2. Chap. 12. But in the beginning of the said chap-
 when he states the question, he tells us, That it is the
 upon the matter with that betwixt the antient church
 he Novatians and Donatists; and all his reasonings are a-
 t separation on account of the personal defects and ble-
 es of church members, or upon a supposition that such
 ns as deserve censure pollute the ordinances to others:
 in his third assertion, in the chapter cited, he acknowledges,
 if the office bearers of the church be defective in the ex-
 e of discipline, and if this defect "become scandalously
 live, it may give occasion to them that are tender, to
 depart,

* *Peac. Plea*, p. 142.

départ, and go where that ordinance of discipline is rigorous." And certainly, where the defect is only in a particular congregation, this may be a sufficient relief for a conscience: But, what shall be done when the defect is scandalously excessive in a national church? And that this is the state of matters in the present judicatories, I have already convinced: Therefore, according to the judicious Mr. Durham we may depart from communion with them; and, in that case, we depart not from the ordinances of Christ, but endeavour, in that station wherein the Lord has placed his office-bearers in his house, to cleave to his ordinances and institutions, both word, sacraments and discipline.

The author of the Essay gives us likewise some passages out of the commentaries of the same judicious divine on Revelation, p. 4, 52, &c. particularly from his observations upon the church of Thyatira. From the very words, as they are cited by our author, it is plain that Mr. Durham's argument is laid against the Sectarian Separatists, viz. "Lord Jesus is no approver nor countenancer of separation from a true church, for the faults of some members in it; neither do faults in some members, and defects in ministers and officers in executing discipline, pollute the ordinances in themselves, or to others, who are free of that guilt." And, after he has reasoned to good purpose on this head, he observes, "It must therefore be an untender thing, to burden honest souls with the apprehension of being polluted from the personal faults of joint worshippers or communicants." And he subjoins several weighty reasons and grounds for the proof of this. Our author concludes from Mr. Durham's reasonings in this part of his commentaries, that "the words of the judicious Durham are plain and pointed against separation from any such church as the church of Scotland is and hath been since the revolution." I must own, that I cannot see that the words of the judicious Durham are either plain or pointed against secession from the present judicatories of this national church: They are indeed plain and pointed against such who affirm that the personal faults of joint worshippers pollute the ordinances in themselves and to others; and, as he manages the argument from the state of the church of Thyatira to excellent purpose against these principles, so he had good reason to be plain and pointed against them, when efforts were made, about

when his lectures were delivered, to introduce these principles into the church of Scotland; and when several professors in Aberdeen did in a short time declare themselves for it: But, tho' he is plain against these unscriptural principles, yet his argument is nowise directed against such who think that secession is warrantable and necessary from a particular visible church, when in her ecclesiastical capacity she is carrying on a course of defection from steps of reformation attained unto, and at the same time refusing to be reformed. As I have laid the argument for secession from the present judicatories, and for a presbyterial association for the support and defence of truth, from the positive and particular commands given to the office bearers of the church of Perga and Thyatira, in the letter on secession; so the reasonings of the judicious Durham are not in the least against the argument as I have stated it: And, if I was to deal with the Arian Separatists, I would reason from the same scriptures and in the very same manner against them; and I wish that such who in our day are in danger of being ensnared into such schemes, would seriously consider the weighty reasonings of the fore said eminent divine.

Our author, Essay, p. 51. gives us a citation from Mr. Gillespie*, viz. "Beware of separating new lights; to separate from, or gather churches out of the true reformed or reforming churches, hath not the least warrant from the word of God, &c." I heartily join with Mr. Gillespie. I think it very unwarrantable to depart from communion with true reformed or reforming churches; but surely our author cannot reckon this national church as she is represented in her present judicatories a reforming church, when he tells us, Essay, p. 59. "I shall not say but the church of Scotland may be worse at this day than sometimes formerly, nor shall I say but that she hath been upon the decline for some time." If she is worse, if she is on the decline, surely she is not a reforming church: But besides, if our author had dealt fairly and plainly, he ought to have told the reader who these new lights are that Mr. Gillespie cautions against; and, if we look to the beginning of that chapter whence the above citation is taken, Mr. Gillespie observes, " 'tis pleaded by some, who pretend to more tenderness of conscience than others, that to establish by the law

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* *Miscel. Quest.* p. 123, 132.

" of the land, a Confession of Faith, or a Directory of
 " worship of God and of the government of the church,
 " to appoint penalties or punishments upon such as maintain
 " the contrary doctrines or practices, is to hold out and
 " the door upon new light." And, having likewise observed
 that the greatest deceits have been brought into the world
 under the name or notion of new lights, he gives ten ex-
 cellent directions and cautions concerning these new lights,
 amongst others the above caution cited by our author. It
 to be regretted, that such new lights have of late appeared
 our horizon, who plead against the establishment of Con-
 fessions of Faith, &c. by the laws of the land: If our author
 had employed his pen against such new lights, providing
 had done it to purpose, he had thereby done more service
 our reformation rights, and our Presbyterian interest, than
 he has done by his *Essay on Separation*.

We have a large quotation out of a letter of Mr. M'Ward
 to some of his friends, *Essay*, p. 53. wherein he warns them
 in pathetic terms against separation, as also another quotation
 from the *Hind-let-loose*; but I am wearied with pursuing
 our author's quotations which are nowise to the purpose, and
 I fear I may weary my reader likewise: If he will take
 trouble to read Mr. M'Ward's *Earnest Contendings*, with
 the letter cited by our author which is subjoined to the said book
 or the *Hind-let-loose*, he will see with his own eyes that they
 all militate against our author; particularly, Mr. M'Ward
 in his letter is expressly for separation from the indulgent
 ministers, and, speaking of them, he saith, " For all of us
 " grant that many of them are godly men; but, alas! their
 " godliness, as it hath been pleaded, hath been of more
 " judice to the work and interest of Christ, than the ungod-
 " liness of all the Prelates and curates." And the separation
 that Mr. M'Ward condemns is a separation that is not founded
 upon clear and just grounds, and every such separation ought
 to be condemned. As for these worthy and great men, Mr.
 Webber, Hogg and Boston; the first two are very often
 mentioned in the *Essay*; they all contended against the
 secessions of the church judicatories in a way of communion
 with them, and so did the seceding brethren at the same
 time, as I have observed in the introduction: And I humbly
 judge that the author of the *Essay* is too bold, if he inter-

the quotations he brings from their writings, to determine what their conduct and practice would have been, if they had lived till the present times. I have already considered, in my printed letter, his quotation from Mr. Boston, May, p. 57. As for that excellent man Mr. Webster, it is well known how deeply he was affected with the proceedings at the judicatories in his own time, especially with the injury at truth received by the slight manner in which Mr. Simson was past by the assembly 1717: But the Lord did in a short time thereafter shut his eyes, that he did not see the greater evils that were a-coming. As for Mr. Hogg, whose letters are frequently mentioned by our author, the last of them bears date, April 16th, 1717; and his postscript to this letter is a sufficient answer to all the quotations that our author brings from them, *viz.* "The preceeding remarks relate to the circumstantiated case of this church, both now and before this time, as it is formerly described." Therefore his letters do not relate to the present circumstantiated case of this national church as I have already described it. He adds, "May we desire and hope, that a merciful retrieval shall further encourage ministers and members thereof to contend for the faith in a regular and respectful way without any further breach, and that the present may at length be healed." But, alas! we have contended in a regular and respectful way, by petitions, representations and otherwise; yet these regular contendings have been despised by the judicatories, and they have been so far from returning to the Lord, that some of the seceding ministers have been thrust out from among them, merely on account of such regular contendings; and others became sensible that they could not safely nor warrantably continue any longer in communion with them.

The author of the Essay reasons against what he calls separation, from the acts of the church of Scotland in what (says he) hath been reckoned her best and purest times, and from the acts and constitutions of foreign churches; particularly, from the act of assembly August 9th, 1643, whereby ministers upon the coast are enjoined to try and search for all books tending to separation: This act did relate to the books of Sectarian Separatists, who at this time were very industrious in spreading their writings. Likewise, our author mentions another act that same year, of date August 15th,

“ In which (says our author) the assembly testify their
 “ nimous consent against all schism and division, unto w
 “ these times, thro’ the working of Satan and his instrum
 “ against the propagation of the gospel of peace, are fo
 “ clined, &c.” This act of assembly was an act for pres
 ing a Directory for the public worship of God, and for u
 ty and uniformity in the same: Any who read that act of
 sembly, and who shall compare it with our author’s quod
 on, will see that he has curtailed it in such a manner, th
 his reader cannot perceive the genuine sense, import and
 sign of it. The act is laid against such scandals and divi
 ons, and the very beginnings of them, which were contr
 to the work of reformation; and therefore, till a Direct
 for worship should be prepared, the assembly prohibits
 discharges the “ condemning one of another in such law
 “ things as have been universally received, and by perpet
 “ custom practised, by the most faithful ministers of the g
 “ pel and opposers of corruptions in this kirk, since the
 “ beginning of reformation to these times.” If the pre
 judicatories had followed the example of this and other
 ssemblies of that period, the lamentable grounds of our se
 sion from them had never taken place.

Our author likewise, p. 46. mentions the act of assem
 1647, entitled, *Act against such as withdraw themselves fr
 the public worship in their own congregations.* “ In this
 “ (says he) for preserving order, unity and peace in the kir
 “ and for preventing of schism, they enjoined every memb
 “ in every congregation to keep their own parish kirk, co
 “ municating there in word and sacrament.” This act
 frequently thrown up by our author, with very indecent
 sinuations against it. I shall in this place offer what I inte
 for the vindicating and clearing of it. The preamble to
 act declares the end and design of it, viz. for preserving
 der, unity; &c. and for preventing schism. I once design
 to have given a more large account of the nature of schism
 a section by itself; but, finding that this book swells up
 my hand, I shall forbear it: Only, I must here observe, th
 we find the word *schism* used several times by the apostle
 his first epistle to the Corinthians, as chap. i. 10. *Now I
 seech you brethren,—and that there be no divisions among y*
 The word *divisions* is in the original *schisms*, chap. xi.

bear that there be divisions among you, or schisms. And if
 enquire, What were these schisms that were in the church
 Corinth? I answer, They were divisions, differences and
 janglings amongst the members of that church, who still re-
 mained joined together in external church-communion, or
 the same church order, discipline and worship: The apos-
 gives a particular instance of their divisions and janglings,
 Cor. i. 12. and iii. 4. One said, *I am of Paul; another,*
I am of Apollos. There was a siding amongst them about
 their ministers and teachers, who held the same testimony of
 Jesus. And here I observe, that the Spirit of God in the holy
 scriptures calls it *schism*, when the members of a particular
 evangelical church put a difference amongst their faithful mini-
 sters and teachers, who are holding the same testimony of the
 Lord Jesus: As this is *schism* in the scripture-sense of the
 word, so it ought to be condemned in all the churches of
 Christ; and this is that schism and separation testified against
 in the above act of the assembly 1647. Our author, when
 speaking of it, p. 95. tells us, "That many think there
 was wanted not a great deal of tyranny in that act of assembly
 1647, &c." But, whatever he or others may think, there
 was wanted not a great deal of scripture-reason in it; in regard
 that all the ministers of the church of Scotland were at that
 time holding the same testimony against Popery, Prelacy, E-
 rastianism and Sectarianism: They were, in their judicative
 capacity, asserting and maintaining the covenanted doctrine,
 worship, government and discipline of the house of God in
 this land, in opposition to every thing contrary to sound doc-
 trine and the power of godliness; the Confession of Faith
 compiled at Westminster was received and approved by this
 assembly: And the introduction to the act our author inveighs
 against runs in the following manner; "Since it hath pleas-
 ed God of his infinite goodness to bless his kirk within this
 nation with the riches of the gospel, in giving to us his or-
 dinances in great purity, liberty, and withal a comely and
 well established order." If these things are considered, it
 is plain that the schism condemned by this assembly is that
 which the scripture calls *schism*, namely, a separating from
 those ministers as are holding the same testimony of Jesus.
 And this will further appear, if we consider the means that
 were enjoined by this assembly for preventing schism; and these
 are of two sorts, the first concerns ministers themselves, and

the other concerns the people. Our author thinks fit to report what concerns the people, and, after his partial manner, he conceals the first mean that is laid down by this faithful assembly, "for preserving order, unity and peace in the kirk, and for maintaining that respect which is due to the ordinances and ministers of Jesus Christ, for preventing schism, noisom errors, &c." But, tho' he thinks fit to omit what is enjoined ministers for attaining the above valuable ends, I think it very necessary to transcribe it, viz. The assembly "doth charge every minister to be diligent in fulfilling his ministry, to be holy and grave in his conversation, to be faithful in preaching, declaring the whole counsel of God, and, as he hath occasion from the text of scripture, to reprove the sins and errors, and press the duties of the time; and in all these to observe the rules prescribed by the assembly: Wherein if he be negligent, he is to be censured by his own presbytery." Therefore this act of assembly obliges ministers and people to their mutual relative duties; and, in order to prevent schism, it enjoins not only every member in every congregation to attend the ministry of his own pastor, but it likewise enjoins every minister in every congregation to be a faithful steward of the mysteries of God. Hence I think it very evident, that the separation condemned by this faithful assembly, is a separation from such ministers who are holding the testimony of Jesus delivered to his church and people in this land.

As for his quotations from the discipline of the famous church of France, and from the Confession of Faith of the churches of Helvetia, the reader may see, from what I have said, how little they make for his purpose. As for that act of union past in the national synod of Privas in the year 1618, the long quotation which our author gives from that act contains many pathetic expressions for union; and the occasion of passing this act, according to our author, was, That at this time there were dissenters in that church; but he has not told us who these dissenters were, nor upon what principles they dissented: But, if the reader would be satisfied about these, he may see what the publisher of the acts, &c. of the famous church of France, in his introduction, §. 14. says upon this head, viz. "There arose a combination of men such as Morlas, &c. who were for accommodating and reconciling the two religions, (i. e. the Popish and Protestant

testant) and these were put upon it by the bribes and pensions of the Romish clergy, and promises of great preferment. — The national synods of Saumur and Privas, &c. did what they could to stem the current." Such as were promoting a *syncretism* or coalition with Rome, were the persons against whom the foresaid synod of Privas expresses themselves in such a pathetic manner, in the quotation given us by our author.

I shall only further notice his quotation from the platform of church-discipline of the churches of New England. Here he gives us a long quotation from Chap. 14. § 8, 9. but it is after our author's partial manner, he stops when he comes to any thing that he thinks may make against him: And therefore, after our author's long citation concerning maintaining communion with a church in the participation of the sacraments when scandalous persons are tolerate in the church, it is added, "If the church cannot be reformed, they (*viz.* such as are grieved with the tolerating of scandalous persons) may use their liberty, as is specified, Chap 13. §. 4." I know not if our author does approve of every thing that is contained in the above platform; but, if he does, he cannot condemn our secession from the present judicatories upon the principles that are laid down in the said platform.

Our author proceeds, p. 59. to tell his reader, That "separation is an evil against which God hath often testified his displeasure, by separating Separatists from one another, and giving them up to gross errors: This (says he) with other arguments, may have weight to make us guard against it." The instances that he gives us are, one Mr. Johnston, a rigid Brownist, and one Mr. Roger Williams, who disturbed the churches in New-England. He mentions one of Mr. Williams' principles, *viz.* That he refused to communicate with the church of Boston, because they would not make a public and solemn declaration of repentance for their having communicated with the church of England, while they were in the realm thereof: But, how comes our author to conceal his other principle mentioned by Mr. Mather in the place quoted by him, *viz.* His violent urging, that the civil magistrate might not punish breaches of the first table in the laws of the ten commandments? Our author has no doubt his own reasons for not mentioning this Sectarian principle, maintained by the said Williams; however, according to Mr. Ma-

ther in his history *, the above principle bred as much disturbance in New-England as that which our author mentions. Our author likewise gives us an example in our own land, p. 61. of Separatists falling from truth to error, "particular-ly in the case of some eminent professors in Aberdeen." "as (says he) is to be seen in the postscript to Mr. Ruth-erford's letters." But, why does not our author give us some instances of the Lord's testifying his displeasure against such as have run into the other extreme; namely, such who have once made a fair profession of regard unto the order, government and discipline of the covenanted church of Scotland, and who have afterwards apostatized from the same; or, who have put to their hands to pull down and destroy what once they seemed to be building? I join with our author when he says, "Tho' providence alone is not to be our rule, yet the Lord's doings and the operations of his hands are to be regarded." And I add, We ought to be very cautious and tender in making particular application of divine providences: But since the grave author of the *Fulfilling of the Scriptures* has given some particular instances of such in our own land, who have turned opposers of the truth which once they professed, and against whom a righteous Lord has testified his displeasure †, I may venture to report them. The instances he gives are of Masters James Nicolson, William Couper, Andrew Forester and Mr. Patrick Adamson, with others, some of whom died in great horror of conscience: And concerning the last I have named, he tells us, He "was once a preacher of great repute; but, being swayed by ambition and private interest, he insinuated himself into king James' favour, and made it his work to overturn the established government and discipline of the church: At length, he got himself into the archbishopric of St. Andrews; and, in the height of his power, he used to boast of three things, that he said could not fail him; his riches, the king's favour, and his learning: But, a short time thereafter, he was forced to get charity from these ministers whom he had persecuted; and, as for the king's favour, he was despised and abhorred by him; and, with respect to his learning in which he did also boast, his parts did so far wither and dry up, that, in seeking a blessing on his meat, he

* Book 7 p. 7.

† *Fulfil. Script.* p. m. 406, 407, &c.

could scarce speak a few words to sense, tho' once admired for his eloquence." These, and the like instances, may be warnings both to our author and to us every one, *not to be big minded, but to fear*; and to remember that word of the Lord, *Let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall.*

S E C T. III.

Wherein the Argument against Secession from the present Judicatories, from the Conduct of faithful Ministers betwixt 1597 and 1638, is examineu.

AS the author of the Essay accuses the seceding Brethren of unwarrantable separation, and of a dangerous schism; he spends some pages in persuading his reader that their conduct is unprecedented, and that they follow not the footsteps of our worthy ancestors betwixt 1596 and 1638. I cannot propose to transcribe his long reasonings upon this head, p. 12, 13, 14, 15, and what is thrown up upon the subject frequently thro' the Essay: I shall endeavour to lay down his argument in its full force and strength, and I have no inclination or design to overlook any thing of weight that is offered by our author. The substance of his reasoning is as follows; "A course of defection and backsliding was carried on betwixt 1596 and 1638, after that the church of Scotland had attained to a high pitch in reformation; yet, tho' for upwards of forty years her defections were lamentable, and far more grievous than can be pretended at this day, our worthy ancestors continued in the church, struggling against her defections, without making secession or separation; they contended against the said defections, without erecting themselves into different judicatories, or any thing like separation. He observes, that in their *Act and Testimony*, p. 13. the seceding ministers affirm, That, during this period of grievous sinning and backsliding, there were several eminent men who witnessed against the same, &c." Upon this says our author, p. 13. "How did these several eminent men witness against the grievous sinning and backsliding of their day?" He subjoins, "Was it not in a way of church-communion?" As the above is the

the substance of our author's argument, so I shall now examine how he confirms and illustrates the same. And here I humbly judge two things must be enquired into; *First*, Whether or not, during the foresaid period, the church of Scotland did in her ecclesiastical or judicative capacity carry on a course of defection and backsliding? *Secondly*, Whether or not all such as witnessed against the course of backsliding continued to contend in a way of communion with the backsliding party? I am heartily sorry that I shall have so frequent ground, upon both these heads, to say concerning one of our author's profession and character, That, instead of shewing what was the practice of our worthy ancestors during the period mentioned, he has very much misrepresented the same, and, instead of narrating matters of fact, he has advanced several things that are neither truth nor matter of fact: I shall be far from saying he has done this deliberately, but I humbly judge he has not duly considered the history of this period of our church.

With respect to the first of these, our author seems to me peremptorily to determine, that the church of Scotland in her judicative capacity carried on a course of defection and backsliding: He asserts, p. 14. "That the kirk took vote in parliament, and constant moderators." But, before I proceed upon this head, it is necessary to acquaint the reader that when our author writes, p. 12. In Italic, *That in the year 1596, according to Calderwood, our sincere general assemblies ended*; I say, it is needful that the reader should know that, from the year 1602 to 1638, there was not a general assembly of the church of Scotland, except one at Aberdeen anno 1605: There were indeed six pack'd meetings of ministers, noblemen and gentlemen, viz. two at Linlithgow, and four at Aberdeen, Glasgow, St. Andrews and Perth, who assumed to themselves the name and authority of general assemblies, and under that name carried on a course of defection; but these meetings were never acknowledged as general assemblies of the church of Scotland, by the faithful ministers of that period; and they were all condemned as pretended assemblies, by the first free and lawful general assembly that met at Glasgow anno 1638: Neither was the authority or constitution of these assemblies ever acknowledged by the most part of presbyteries in Scotland, as we may afterwards see. As for the assembly at Aberdeen anno 1605, though the
ministers

ministers that met there did nothing but constitute and appoint the diet of another assembly, yet it was acknowledged and defended as a lawful assembly by the honest ministers in that period, and Mr. James Melvill wrote an excellent apology for the said assembly *. It is also well known what hardships several great men who were members of that assembly suffered on account of the testimony they gave when they constituted the said assembly in name of the Lord Jesus, and appointed the diet of the next assembly, notwithstanding of the opposition that was made unto them by the laird of Lawiston the king's commissioner. Masters Welsh, Forbes and others were imprisoned, prosecuted as criminals, and six of them were banished; and besides, from the year 1596 to 1602, the church of Scotland had not any assembly which was accounted a free and lawful assembly by the honest ministers of that period: Therefore, when our author tells his reader, that in the year 1596 *our sincere general assemblies ended*, if he had dealt in a fair and candid manner, he ought also to have told us, that from the year 1602 to 1638, that is, for about the space of 36 years, the church of Scotland had not a general assembly whose authority and constitution was owned by honest ministers and presbyteries in that period, except the assembly of Aberdeen 1605; he ought likewise to have told, that from the year 1596 to 1638, that is, about the space of 41 years, the church of Scotland had not a general assembly which was reckoned by the witnessing ministers in that period to be a free and lawful assembly. But it is needful that I give some more particular evidences, that the course of defection during this period was not carried on by the church of Scotland in her judicative capacity.

King James VI. having formed a design to introduce Prelacy into the church of Scotland, he gained some corrupt churchmen to his side, whom he made use of as tools for promoting his designs. And the first direct step that was taken by the court, towards the subversion of the order and discipline of this church, was the bringing in some ministers to vote in parliament: And, in order to this, a commission of the general assembly anno 1597, consisting only of fourteen ministers, whereof seven were a *quorum*, gave in a petition to the parliament in name of the kirk for ministers to vote in parliament

* *Cald. Hist. p. 506:*

ment*; this was done without any authority, commission or instruction from the general assembly: And when the general assembly met thereafter at Dundee, Calderwood us†, that “ the number that carried for ministers were not such as laboured in the word, others wanting commission; and that, notwithstanding their help, and the king’s authority bewraying him plain party, they exceeded the sincere sort only by votes.” At the downsitting of this assembly, Mr. Andrew Melvill and Mr. John Johnston professors in St. Andrew’s members of the assembly, were charged to depart out of the town under pain of horning. When this assembly was overawed, when members that had right to vote were debarred from it, when such as had no commission from presbyteries voted, worthy Mr. Davidson had just ground to proceed as he did, against the foresaid assembly, as not having the freedom due to a free general assembly; after which protestation he left the assembly, and many ministers following subscribed the same. From all which it is evident, that the affair of ministers voting in parliament had not the authority of a free and lawful general assembly of the church of Scotland, and consequently was not the deed of the church of Scotland in its judicative capacity. As for the assembly that met at Montrose anno 1600, where the cautions were voted, for such ministers as had vote in parliament, against their attempting anything contrary to the order and discipline of this church; is a just observe of the assembly 1638, in their act against the civil places and power of kirkmen, “ That the act of the assembly holden at Montrose 1600, anent ministers voting in parliament, being pressed by authority, did rather than an *interim* tolerate the same, and that limited by many conditions, than in freedom of judgment allow thereof.” And besides, it is obvious from the account that Calderwood gives of the said assembly at Montrose, that it was neither a free nor lawful assembly of the church of Scotland.

The next step taken by the court, towards the introduction of Prelacy, was the setting up of constant moderators in synods and presbyteries; but, before this step is taken, eight eminent ministers, who had considerable weight in the judicatories, were taken up by the king’s authority to London.

* *Cald. Hist.* p. 412.

† *Ibidem*, p. 416, 419, 420.

that great man, Mr. John Welsh, with five others are banished; several faithful ministers are imprisoned and confined, on one pretext or another: Yet, after all, the court durst not venture the matter of constant moderators to the determination of a free assembly; therefore a meeting of ministers, with a considerable number of noblemen and barons, all nominated by the king, is called at Linlithgow anno 1606; at this convention it is appointed, that constant moderators should be admitted in every presbytery: But, when the Linlithgow came down refined from the court, a clause is found in it appointing constant moderators in synods likewise *; and all synods and presbyteries were charged, under pain of rebellion, to admit the constant moderators: But, how were the acts of the above pretended assembly received? Calderwood says, Some obeyed willingly: others yielded for fear; some refused *simpliciter*; some took instruments, that, if the person appointed should enter unto that office, it was violent dealing and without their consents." The *Hind-let-loose*, 15. says, many presbyteries refused resolutely. The Latin historian † says, "Some of the ministers, being forced under pain of rebellion, did submit to the act past at Linlithgow, but under condition that the matter should be more fully examined in a free general assembly." As for the provincial synods, none of them accepted the constant moderator except the synod of Angus ‡. Calderwood gives some particular instances of the faithful behaviour of synods in opposition to all the violent threats of the court, and amongst others the synod of Perth: lord Scoon came with a commission from the king to that synod at their meeting April 1607; he threatened them in the king's name if they would not accept of a constant moderator: But, notwithstanding of all his threats and most outrageous insults, their last moderator Mr. Row took the roll of the synod in his own hand; and, when Scoon would have pulled it out of his hand, he held the synod-roll with the one, and lord Scoon with the other hand, and called the names of the members, who chused their moderator according to the form and orders of the church of Scotland. When the new moderator was chosen, he began with prayer according to the custom of judicatories at that time: Scoon began in a profane manner in time of prayer, and threw the table;

* *Cald. Hist.* p. 555,—564.

† *Hist. Mor.* p. 12.

‡ *Cald. Hist.* p. 569, 572.

table, about which some of them were kneeling, over them; but they continued in prayer, and never stirred. Lord Scoon, being also provost of the town, called for the baillies and commanded them to ring the common bell, and dismiss these rebels; but the baillies honestly declined yielding obedience to him. When they returned to the next diet of the same synod, they found the church doors shut: Some of the town-council went to crave the keys from lord Scoon the provost, but in vain; the baillies offered to make patent doors, but this the ministers refused, and they choosed rather to meet at the south church-door, in the midst of a great concourse of people, who accompanied them with tears, and brought tables and seats for them. And, after the synod was constituted, they enquired what presbyteries in their bounds had accepted of the constant moderators appointed by the meeting at Linlithgow; and none were found but the presbytery of Perth, who reported to the synod, that he had entered the chair by violence, as their protestation taken in presbytery did bear; and in the mean time declared themselves willing to submit to censure. The synod made an act, That every presbytery, at their first meeting after the synod, should choode their own moderator according to the common order. I have only given a short hint of what is more fully recorded by Calderwood *, that the reader may see that the judicatories of the church of Scotland were at this time contending with great faithfulness and zeal for their just rights and privileges, in opposition unto the greatest violence: And, from what I have observed, the reader may likewise see, that constant moderators were forced upon synods and presbyteries; and that the church of Scotland in her judicative capacity was so far from giving her consent unto them; that she wrestled with great zeal against this imposition: Hence, as matters were then stand- ed, there was not the least ground of secession from any of the judicatories: And when, at the meeting of parliament the same year, bishops were advanced to civil dignities, though no ecclesiastical jurisdiction was given them, the commissioners from the several presbyteries through Scotland being met at Edinburgh, gave in a protestation against the same, in the name of the church in general, and in name of their presbyteries from which they had commission.

* *Cald. Hist. p. 566. &c.*

† *Ibid. Hist. p. 527. Apol. Relat. p. 34.*

from all which it appears, that it is so far from being matter of fact (as the author of the Essay reports) *that the kirk vote in parliament and constant moderators*, that on the contrary the church of Scotland did then, in her judicative capacity, with great zeal and faithfulness oppose the same. Tho' the above mentioned steps were taken in order to the bringing up of Prelacy and tho', as Calderwood observes*, The chief opposites unto this course were either banished, rewarded or confined; yet the court durst not venture upon a free election amongst the remnant of the ministry: therefore, when a general assembly is indicted at Glasgow in 1610, all the members are nominate by the king; at this pretended assembly the bishops are appointed constant moderators of synods, and a negative was given them over synods and presbyteries. Calderwood makes the following observation concerning episcopacy as it was introduced by the foresaid assembly †; "There was no mention made in the assembly of Glasgow of the consecration of bishops: For, howbeit the unhappy pack there convened tied presbyteries and synods unto them in the cases expressed; yet meant they not to determine, that there was a distinct office in the word, differing from the office of a minister: For by the bishop of the diocese, in the act of Glasgow, is not meant a bishop by office, but only a simple minister, so stiled in the preceeding assembly, and that vulgarly, in respect of his great benefice of bishopric." As the members of the foresaid pretended assembly were all nominate by the king, so there were none of the honest part of the ministry present; and, as Calderwood reports, *Neither was it convenient that they should mix with them*, Hist. p. 623. Again, the five articles of Perth, whereby some of the English ceremonies were brought into Scotland, were concluded by a meeting at Perth usurping the name and authority of a general assembly, but testified against by the bulk and body of ministers and professors thro' the land. From what is above observed, we may see a vast difference betwixt the conduct of judicatories during the period before 1638, and the practice of the present judicatories: As for instance, The course of defection, from the year 1596 and downward, was carried on by threatnings, and manifold acts of force and violence from the civil powers; but the course of defection is carried

* Calderwood's Hist. p. 612.

† Ibid, p. 644.

on at present by the judicatories themselves, our ruin is in ourselves; there is no violence or force done the judicatories; they are not terrified with threatnings, they walk readily and willingly in their present backsliding course and way. To gain, the above mentioned course of defection was carried on by packed meetings of some corrupt ministers, with nobles and gentlemen, who usurped the name and authority of a general assembly; when, as Mr. Forester observes*, the true representatives or lawful assemblies of the church of Scotland never consented to the said course of defection: The true ministers and presbyteries during that period was for a free and lawful general assembly, consisting of members chosen according to the form and order prescribed by the church of Scotland; but this they could not obtain till the memorable 1638. when the Lord turned back the captivity of his people: But the present course of defection is carried on by general assemblies, consisting of members chosen after the usual manner by presbyteries. From all which it is evident, that the present course of defection is carried on by the present judicatories of this national church in their ecclesiastical or judicative capacity, and who in the same capacity are willingly walking after the commandments of men; whereas the course of defection, from 1596 to 1638, was carried on by outward violence and force from the secular powers, and by pretended assemblies, in opposition unto the contendings, not of ministers only, but also of the proper judicatories of the church of Scotland.

The next thing that I am to enquire into is, If such as faithfully witnessed against the course of defection, during the above mentioned period, did contend in a way of church communion with the corrupt party; or, if they contended in a way of secession from them? The author of the Essay is very peremptory and positive, as we have heard, that they all contended in a way of church-communion; but in this he misrepresents their conduct and procedure; and in several particular instances he asserts what is neither truth nor matter of fact: It is therefore needful, that upon this head I give some particular instances of secession from the corrupt party that were carrying on at this time a course of defection; and, from the practice and declared sentiments of some eminent ministers that I shall name, I hope to make it evident,

* *Confut. 3d. Dial. p. 6.*

their contending was not always in a way of church-
 communion with the corrupt party, or with their corrupt ju-
 ratories, as the author of the Essay positively determines.
 And, for clearing this head, I may observe in the first place,
 that many presbyteries, as well as particular ministers, ex-
 pressly disowned the authority and constitution of the several
 pretended assemblies in that period, as also they refused obe-
 dience to their acts: Many presbyteries, as I have narrated
 above, never admitted of the constant moderators appointed
 to the pretended assembly at Linlithgow 1606; and, when
 the five articles were past by the pretended assembly at Perth,
 the most part of presbyteries, as well as particular ministers,
 refused to acknowledge the authority of that assembly, or to
 give obedience to its acts and constitutions. Any that read
 Calderwood's history may see what numbers of ministers were
 suspended, deprived and confined, for refusing obedience to
 the acts of the said assembly, and for their disowning it as a
 pretended and unlawful assembly: The Prelatic party, who
 were going along with the court-measures, durst not venture
 the cause of such ministers to be tried by their presbyteries;
 and therefore a court called the *High Commission* was erected
 by the king's sole authority, and by this court the above sen-
 tences were past against them. And when the parliament
 met anno 1621, where the articles of Perth were ratified, a
 great body of the ministry convened at Edinburgh, and agreed
 upon a solemn protestation against the usurped govern-
 ment of the bishops and the articles of Perth; but, being
 charged by proclamation to depart out of the town, they leave
 information and admonition behind them, to be put into
 the hands of the members of parliament, wherein they con-
 demn the meeting at Perth as an unlawful assembly, and their
 proceedings as null and void: They likewise agreed upon a
 solemn protestation against the usurped government of the bi-
 shops and the ceremonies, to be given in to the parliament,
 in case they should ratify the Perth articles. This protesta-
 tion was signed by one of their number in name of the rest,
 whom they empowered to give it into the parliament; but,
 when he could not get access into the parliament house, he
 fixed a copy of the said protestation on the cross and other
 public places, taking instruments in the usual manner when
 the act of parliament ratifying Perth articles was published *.

O

Calderwood

Calderwood likewise reports, That the greatest part of the best-qualified ministers thro' the land, and of the most pious professors, refused the authority and constitution of Perth assembly. Also, a paper before me, entitled, *A short relation of the state of the kirk of Scotland, since the reformation of religion unto the present time, for information and advertisement to our brethren in the kirk of England, &c.* published anno 1638, bears, "That the most religious and judicious of the ministry did solemnly protest in name of the reformed kirk of Scotland against the ratification of the articles of Perth in parliament; whereunto the most part of the particular congregations have adhered, and never practised these articles." Upon what I have now observed, I enquire at the author of the Essay, Whether or not, if presbyteries, ministers and professors, should not only refuse to give obedience to the acts of the present national assembly but likewise disown their authority and constitution; Would not such presbyteries be reckoned seceding presbyteries, and would not such ministers and professors in like manner be reckoned seceders? And, in this very period, the charge of schism and separation was laid against these faithful ministers who disowned the authority of the pretended assemblies of the said period. When this charge was laid against that zealous minister, Mr. John Scrimger minister at Kinghorn, before the high commission court, he replied, "As for me, keeping a schism, ye do wrong to alledge so, ye shall not be able to quit yourselves of it; we walked all soundly in the truth, ye have leaped from us, ye make schisms." Before I give instances of the sentiments and practice of some eminent ministers during this period, I must take notice of what is affirmed by our author, p. 14. "Yea, says he, in former times of great defections, worthy ministers were far from thinking it duty to separate and erect themselves in separate judicatories, that, when court and kirk would have had them forsake these judicatories, they still attended and opposed sinful measures taken in them at that time." And he mentions two that were discharged by the court to return to the judicatories in the year 1607, viz. Mr. John Carmichael, and Mr. Henry Livingston, who was confined to his own parish upon the account of the proceedings at Perth synod above-mentioned. But our author might have known, that

proper judicatories of the church of Scotland were then attending for their just rights and privileges, in opposition to oppression and violence from the court: It is true, that, at that time, the court confined many worthy ministers, and charged them to attend upon presbyteries and synods, with design to carry on the cause of Episcopacy; and it was the duty of ministers to attend upon the proper judicatories, in order to testify and witness against the encroachments that were made upon them; an instance of which I have given in the faithful behaviour of the synod of Perth and Stirling. And I must also here observe, that our author is mistaken, when he affirms that the kirk at this time would have worthy ministers forsake these judicatories: He can give no instances of this from any ecclesiastical judicatory at that time in being; the two instances above mentioned do only prove that the court would have had them forsake the judicatories. But, if ministers attended the judicatories before the pretended assembly at Glasgow 1610, yet the case altered very much, when the said assembly appointed bishops to preside in synods, and gave them a negative over them: Then many honest ministers refused to attend the said synods; and the said pretended assembly, judging it would be so, did enact, "That whatsoever minister, without just cause and lawful excuse made, shall absent himself from the visitation or the diocesan assembly, he shall be suspended from his office and benefice, and, if he amend not, shall be deprived *." And this made many ministers obnoxious to the high commission court, who (as Calderwood observes) put in execution the orders of assemblies over-ruled by the bishops, in regard they saw very well that they would not get the concurrence of the ordinary judicatories of the church. After the said pretended assembly, synods became very unfrequent, many honest ministers had no freedom to be present at them. I shall not weary the reader with many particular instances; only, he may take one amongst many, and that is of Mr. David Calderwood, who (according to our author, Essay, p. 178.) was excluded in a way of church communion betwixt 1610 and 1638. I find that this great man reports, that, at a conference he had with some of the bishops, they urged him to repair to the synods; and the bishop of Caithness said to him, Come and say, *Hic sum*, [i. e. *I am here*] and then do as

* *Cald. Hist.* p. 632.

“ you please.” To which Mr. Calderwood replied, “ *hic sum*, or, *I am here*, is the question *;” and he gives some weighty reasons why he could not be present at synod. I hope that the reader will be satisfied, that this is an instance of a considerable minister, who declined to contend in a way of church-communion with the backsliding party. I shall likewise give him the judgment, upon this head, of one who was reckoned amongst the most eminent ministers of the church of Scotland, viz. Mr. John Welsh, who in a letter directed to Mr. Robert Bruce, after charging the bishops with perfidy and apostasy, &c. concludes, “ Therefore they are not to be heard any more, either in public, or in consistories, colleges or synods; for, what fellowship hath light with darkness †?” What can be more plain for secession from the corrupt party in that period? Yet our author has the assurance to say, Essay, p. 12. “ That our worthy ancestors from the year 1596, continued in the church without making secession or separation, tho’ still they struggled against her defections.” And, amongst other worthy men, he names Masters David Calderwood and John Welsh. Likewise, the same Mr. Welsh was imprisoned on account of his being at the assembly at Aberdeen, and also banished in the year 1606; and as he never returned again to Scotland, so he never joined in communion with any of the corrupt party, or with their corrupt judicatories. I shall here likewise subjoin the judgment of that great man, Mr. James Melville, concerning the manner after which he thought the Lord’s witnesses in that period should have testified, as it lies in a letter he sends from England directed to one of his confined brethren in Scotland ‡, where I find the following words; “ Alas! if that spirit of action, zeal and courage, that sometimes did mightily reign in our kirk, were kindled up again, that might make a few from every presbytery and province to convene together in the name of Christ, and censure these corruptions of the kirk to the uttermost.” In which words, this eminent minister gives his judgment in a very pathetic manner, not only for secession from the corrupt party at that time, but also for meeting together in a distinct judicative capacity from them, in order to censure them on account of their corruptions; yea, he declares it to

* *Cald. Hist.* p. 687.

† *P.* 743.

‡ *P.* 614.

the duty even of a few, to exercise the key of discipline in ensuring the corrupt party.

After our author has named the eight ministers, who were called up to London and detained there, that in their absence the Episcopal cause might be advanced, he adds, "They did not separate, tho' then *constant moderators, vote in parliament by the kirk, and bishops* were brought in." But our author might have known, that these eminent ministers were taken up to London before either constant moderators or bishops were brought in; and two of them, *viz.* Masters Andrew and James Melvills, never returned to Scotland, and therefore could not sit in judicatories after constant moderators and bishops were brought in; the other six ministers, tho' they returned to Scotland, yet were confined to their own parishes, and had not access to sit in judicatories: As for Mr. John Davidson, who is also mentioned by our author, he was confined to his own parish, and there is no evidence of his sitting in the judicatories after his protestation against the assembly at Dundee. Our author likewise tells us, p. 177. That, from 1610 to 1637, Masters Robert Bruce, Andrew and James Melvills, David Calderwood, Samuel Rutherford, Alexander Henderson, David Dickson and others, remained in the church." By remaining in the church our author means, that they continued in the judicatories, and contended in a way of church communion; but, in the several instances he gives, he writes at random. I am sorry that I must charge him so often with narrating what is neither truth nor matter of fact: As for Masters Andrew and James Melvills, they never had access to contend in any of the judicatories after the year 1610, in regard, as I have just now observed, they were taken up to London in the year 1606, and never returned to Scotland. And, as for that great man Mr. Robert Bruce, he was violently thrust from his charge in the year 1600, and banished the country, because he had not much satisfaction about the truth of Gowrie's conspiracy, as that he could with assurance give public thanks unto the Lord for the king's deliverance from it; and after this time he never sat in any of the judicatories: And tho' he had liberty granted him by the king to return again to his own native country, yet he was confined first to his own house at Kinaird, and afterwards to Inverness and other places; and, in the several places where he was confined, he continued still to

exercise his ministry with great success without any conjunction with the judicatories. During his confinement at Monland he kept two solemn fasts, assisted by the famous Mr. Boyd principal of the college of Glasgow, and Mr. Robert Scott minister there*; and he died *anno* 1631, witnessing against the defections of the times without any connexion with the judicatories. As for Mr. David Calderwood, I have reported his judgment already against joining in synods after the year 1610. This great and learned man was confined to his own parish, as also his *co-presbyter* Mr. Johnston, on account of their declining bishop Law's visitation of the presbytery of Jedburgh. Mr. Calderwood was afterward deprived by the high commission court, and an act of banishment was passed against him by the privy council †. With respect to Mr. Henderson, there is no doubt that he joined in synods after the year 1610, for he was Prelatic in his judgment; but our author cannot prove that he continued to sit in the said synods after he was savingly enlightened by the ministry of Mr. Robert Bruce, as is reported by our author from the *Fulfilling of the Scriptures*, Essay, p. 31. As for Mr. David Dickson, who is also mentioned by our author, he was deprived by the high commission court *anno* 1622, and confined to Turriff in the north; and tho' he obtained liberty by the Earl of Eglinton's intercession to return to his charge at Irvine, yet our author cannot instruct it, that ever he sat in any of the synods during this period. Our author thinks fit likewise to mention Mr. Rutherford amongst others who remained in the judicatories. Tho' Mr. Rutherford was ordained to the holy ministry during the time that Episcopacy prevailed, yet I hope none will credit our author if he should affirm that Mr. Rutherford was ordained by the bishops, or that he sat in their diocesan synods. When the judgment and practice of the worthy ministers I have named is considered, as also Mr. Rutherford's known zeal against Prelacy, our author's positive affirmations that Mr. Rutherford and other eminent ministers did sit in such judicatories, must be held as mere calumnies, until our author produce good vouchers for them, which he is not able to do. But tho' many of the ministers at that time did not frequent the synods, yet they continued to keep up their presbyterial meetings. And this leads me to give a short hint of the state of presbyteries before the year 1638. Our author tells us, Essay, p. 14. "That, because honest ministers a

* *Cald. Hist.* p. 736. † P. 684.

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tended presbyteries, therefore the king came at last to discharge them altogether." Neither is this matter of fact. The place in Calderwood, to which our author directs us*, years, that, at the pretended assembly at Glasgow 1610, the Earl of Dunbar commissioner produced the king's warrant to discharge presbyteries; but this warrant was never put in execution. Tho' such threatnings were frequently used to frighten ministers into a compliance with the measures of the court, yet, from the 1596 to the 1638, presbyteries were neither abolished nor discharged. Calderwood indeed observes, that the pretended assembly 1610, to please the king, instead of the word *presbytery*, designed them the *ministers of the bounds*. Our author likewise tells us in the same page, "That at that time, viz. before 1638, it seems elders were not allowed to sit with ministers in presbytery." Our author likewise is mistaken in this; for there was no law during that period, either civil or ecclesiastical, disallowing elders their sitting with ministers in presbytery. Neither does his citation from the presbytery-register of Kircaldy, of the date September 13, 1638, prove what he alledges; there he tells us, 'tis said that the "Earl of Rothes and Mr. Robert Douglas shew, that it was thought meet by the meeting at Coupar, ruling elders should sit with the presbytery." This proves only that elders were negligent in their duty; and instances can be given of many presbyteries in Scotland, where frequently from one synod to another an elder is not to be seen in the presbytery: But it would be very unreasonable if we should from this conclude, *it seems they are not allowed to sit with ministers in presbytery*. And, with respect to the state of presbyteries, the reader may take the following short account from Mr. Woodrow's history †, where, in giving an account of the difference betwixt the Prelates before the year 1638, and these that were set up in the year 1662, he observes, "Our first Prelates were not against the meetings of presbyteries in their several jurisdictions, but they continued to meet regularly, and had almost the whole of church discipline in their hands; but now there is no church power save in the person of the bishop, and what he pleases to measure graciously out to whom he pleases." From the above account it is evident, that before the 1638 the presbyteries continued to meet regularly, and had almost the whole

* P. 569.

† Vol. 1. p. 117, 118.

of church-discipline in their hands: And from what I have observed it may appear, that any power of church-discipline they wanted, was violently taken out of their hands by the court of high commission; and in this case the presbyteries were not active, but passive. Mr. Woodrow adds, from the reverend Mr. Robert Douglas' remarks, " That he (*viz.* Mr. Douglas) dealt with the statesmen, in the year 1662, to " to discharge presbyteries, but to allow them to stand as under the former bishops; and suggested, that several ministers would keep these meetings, if permitted to continue as before, notwithstanding bishops were set up; but if pulled down, and set up in subordination to the bishops, an honest minister would keep them." From this account which Mr. Douglas gives, it is evident, that before the year 1638 presbyteries were not pulled down, and that they did not at that time subsist in subordination to the bishops. It is a loss unto us, that we have not a full and clear history of the state of the church of Scotland before the year 1638; we have only some historical fragments from Calderwood, and we have nothing at all from the year 1624, where his history ends. If we had any distinct history of that period, I doubt not but it would appear, that as presbyteries continued to meet regularly, so they likewise ordained men to the holy ministry without the assistance and concurrence of the then bishops. I find from Calderwood, that in the year 1621, when honest ministers are convened out of all quarters of the country to protest against the parliament's ratifying Perth articles, and when they are charged by proclamation to depart out of the town under pain of rebellion, that one of the reasons of the said charge is, That some of them had intruded themselves in the pulpit without a lawful warrant or calling; and according to the language of the court at this time, intrusion without a lawful calling or warrant was, when the bishop did not assist in the ordination, in the manner appointed by the pretended assembly at Glasgow. I shall only take notice of another of the authorities adduced by our author, to prove that our worthy ancestors made a noble and resolute stand against all encroachments and corruptions, but still in a way of church communion; *viz.* the *Apologetical Relation*, p. 100. where, giving the difference betwixt the state of judicatories before the year 1638, and after the year 1662, 'tis said, " The case then and now differeth far: for then these judicatories

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catories were standing when the Prelates were brought in upon them, and ministers were then bound to keep possession of their rights so long as they could, &c." And it is very plain from the account I have given of the state of presbyteries, that it was their duty to keep possession of their right, under violence and oppression from the civil powers. The author of the *Apologetical Relation* likewise observes in the same place, That "then they were hedges standing in the Prelate's way, tho' much weakened by reason of the civil power opposing; but now they are props to support and strengthen the hands of the Prelates, as being wholly ruled and guided by them." But it is to be regretted, that presbyteries at present are so far from being hedges in the way of the supreme judicatory who are carrying on a course of defection, that they are rather props to strengthen and support them, in so far as they do not duly testify against their proceedings, nor censure their commissioners, who are either active in carrying on the said course, or give not a suitable testimony against the same.

Our author to confirm and strengthen his argument against secession, from the conduct of ministers before the year 1638, gives us a citation from the testimony of the ministers of Fife and Perth; "Then (says he) there was no separation, tho', as the said ministers declare in their testimony, Prelates were high in power, a service book and book of canons were obtruded, and the greatest part of the ministry carried away with the course of conformity, and couching with Issachar under the burden." But this quotation is not laid in very fair manner, in regard a whole sentence is omitted betwixt the first and last part of the said quotation. According to 'tis laid by our author, his reader may think that the ministers of Perth and Fife say, That the greatest part of the ministry submitted to the service-book and the book of canons; whereas the ministers of Perth and Fife say no such thing: And any who know the history of that time, know, that very few of the ministry submitted unto them; and these few either left the country at that wonderful turn in the year 1638, or were duly censured by the assembly that met that year. Yet it is true what the ministers of Fife affirm, That the greatest part were carried away with the course of conformity, in regard many did continue to sit in synods after bishops were intruded into the moderator's chair; and,

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In this respect, such ministers couched with Issachar and the burden. But the ministers of Fife do not say that all the ministry were carried away with the course of conformity and therefore, for these reasons, I humbly judge that our author's quotation is so far from supporting his argument that there was no separation under that period, that it rather militates against him, and shews that there was a great part of the ministry who were not carried away with the course of conformity, and who did not contend in the way of ecclesiastical communion with the Prelatic party at that time.

I shall not insist further on our author's instances from that period, when I have taken notice of the account that he gives of Mr. Rutherford's case, p. 14. "And at that time (says he) error, particularly Arminianism, was rampant in this church," and, for writing against it in that period, Rutherford was "put from his charge, and sent prisoner to Aberdeen, where he was confined, as appears from his first letter." It is very unpleasant to me, that I must so often charge our author with misrepresenting or disguising matters of fact: Any one who reads the above words, may be ready to conclude that Mr. Rutherford was censured by some church judicatory for writing against error, and defending the truth; but, in the letter to which our author refers, Mr. Rutherford writes, That he had pleased the Lord Jesus "to let loose the malice of the interdicted lords in his house" (meaning the Prelates) to deprive him of his ministry at Anwoth, &c. The case flows plainly thus; Mr. Rutherford was brought before the high commission court; the book that he wrote against the Arminians was one challenge against him; his *lording* the Prelates was another, as he tells us in his letter Part 3d, Letter 36. And, according to the practice of faithful ministers at that time, he declined the said court, upon which he was deprived, and confined to Aberdeen. I hope it will not be alledged that this court was a judicatory of the church of Scotland: None of the judicatories of the church did even at that time condemn or censure Mr. Rutherford for writing against the Arminians; and, however corrupt the pretended assemblies were, yet I must do them the justice to own that their Confession of Faith agreed upon at their pretended assembly at Aberdeen was both sound and orthodox, and several propositions in it are laid directly against the Arminians.

in articles: tho' our author alledges that Arminianism was
 en rampant in the church, yet there is ground to fear that
 is more rampant now than it was then. Rushworth in his
 collections observes *, from the memoirs of the house of Ha-
 liltoun, " That the opinions of Arminius were generally ill-
 reported of in all the reformed churches, and nowhere
 worse than in Scotland; and that most of the bishops and
 their adherents undertook openly and zealously the defence
 of these tenets." This is mentioned in the foresaid me-
 moirs, as one of the springs of that remarkable revolution in
 the year 1738; The whole land being generally dissatisfied
 with Arminian doctrine, this among other things raised their
 indignation at the Prelatic party, who had openly espoused
 the same: And we shall afterwards see, that the general as-
 sembly, that met the foresaid year, did duly censure such as
 had openly taught Arminianism. I shall have done with our
 author's reasonings upon this head, when I have observed
 that our author alledges, p. 13. viz. " That the defections
 of the church of Scotland after the year 1596 for upwards
 of forty years were lamentable, and far more grievous than
 can be pretended at this day." And here I must differ
 from our author, when he affirms that the defections of the
 church of Scotland were far more grievous in that period than
 can be pretended at this day; and that because Arminian er-
 rors were not brought to the bar of the judicatories during
 the period mentioned, and dismissed without any censure at
 all: But this is the case with respect to the present judicato-
 ries; Arminian errors have been brought to their bar once
 and again, and have been dismissed without any particular
 testimony against them. As also, tho' some of the Prelatic
 party openly defended Arminian doctrines in the foresaid pe-
 riod, yet the sound of Arian blasphemy was never heard in
 the church of Scotland till these degenerate times wherein we
 live; and the Arian scheme, in its modern shape and dress,
 has likewise been dismissed from the bar of judicatories with-
 out any suitable testimony given against it. Again, if the pro-
 per judicatories of the church of Scotland did not in the for-
 mer period censure and condemn the abettors of Arianism, it
 was because they were under the restraints of outward force
 and violence; and therefore, when they are mercifully delivered
 from

from these restraints in the year 1638, the sword of discipline was faithfully drawn against the teachers of Arminian doctrine: But it cannot be alledged that the present judicatories of this national church are under any such restraints of forward force and violence, and yet they dismiss Arminian and Arian blasphemies from their bar in the manner already observed. Further, during that period before the year 1638, presbyteries subsisted in a kind of independent state, without subordination to the bishops, also for the space of about thirty six years, *viz.* from 1602 to 1638, without acknowledging a subjection or subordination to the pretended general assemblies of that period; yea, for the space of twenty years, that is, from 1618 to 1638, they had not any ecclesiastical court which had the name of a general assembly. But, in the present period, presbyteries continue in their subordination and subjection unto general assemblies; and consequently all the present judicatories of this national church are one ecclesiastical body, wherein a course of defection is carried on from our reformation and covenanted principles. Therefore, and for all the above reasons, I humbly judge the defections of this national church, as she is represented in the present judicatories, are far more grievous than can be proved concerning the above mentioned period betwixt 1596 and 1638.

After our author has done with his reasoning p. 15. concludes his argument in the following manner; "The above proposition I have narrated matter of fact, and shown what was the practice of our worthy ancestors who remained in the church of Scotland in the midst of most lamentable defections, from 1597 to 1638;" (but how has he narrated matter of fact, and if he has fairly represented the practice of our worthy ancestors, I shall now leave it to the reader to judge: Our author adds) "Yet I have not declared my own opinion in relation to their conduct, nor what I should reckon duty were things come to such a pass with us as in their day, which God forbid they ever should be." I take this to be a modest insinuation from our author, as if he was more strict in his principles than these eminent men he has named, *viz.* Masters Bruce, Welsh, Rutherford, &c. However, I have no manner of strait to deliver my opinion in relation to their conduct, neither shall I be so very shy to

I should reckon duty if I was in their situation: And before I humbly judge, that, in a consistency with the testimony which I judge it my duty to hold in conjunction with other brethren, I could have joined in such presbyteries, during that period, as were wrestling against a course of defection, and who were no way active in carrying on the said course, but rather passive, bearing and suffering violence and persecution from the civil powers, and who were also independent upon any general assembly till the Lord turned back the iniquity of his people in the year 1638. That which seems the culpable in their conduct is, that, according to Mr. Melvill's judgment above express'd, some few ministers of every presbytery and province did not associate together in a national assembly, in order to censure the wicked subversion of the order and discipline of the church of Scotland. The apology that can be made for them is, That, if they had followed this course, they might have expected, according to the violence and tyranny of these times, the same treatment Mr. Welsh and his brethren met with for holding an assembly at Aberdeen. Our author concludes, "Yet it naturally follows, such as remained in judicatories in that period, they could never have entertained a thought of separation from us at this day." Nay, it rather follows, that if such ministers, who contended with so much faithfulness and zeal, against violence and opposition from the civil powers, for the rights and privileges of the kingdom of the Lord Jesus, were alive at this day, they would never acknowledge the present judicatories as their genuine offspring, who are departers from, or giving up with, in the many particular instances which I have mentioned, these reformation-principles, for which our worthy ancestors did valiantly contend, and for which they endured so many and so great severities and hardships. I am sensible I have insisted too long upon this head; I thought it necessary, in order to give the reader some view of the conduct and behaviour of the witnesses for Christ in Scotland before the year 1638, in regard it is generally misrepresented, and their practice is, without the least ground or reason, adduced as an argument against the conduct of the seceding brethren.

I have now done with our author's argument, as it is laid against the seceding ministers from that former period of this church, whereby he represents their conduct as altogether unprecedented,

precedented, and contrary to the judgment, sentiments and practice of our worthy ancestors; and in his preface, p. 1. he says with a magisterial air, "It gave me the greatest freedom in writing against separation from the church of Scotland in our day, that I could neither see scripture precept, nor promise nor example, nor any approved footsteps of any flock, to countenance it in any former age since Christ has been a church upon earth." Thus he speaks upon the matter to the seceding ministers, as Eliphaz did to Job *, *Call now if there be any that will answer you, and to which of the saints will you turn?* To which all the seceding ministers may answer, We will turn to these faithful ministers who refused to say, *Hic sum*, or, *am I here*, in these corrupt judicatories of former times of defection: Also, we will turn to these ministers and presbyteries who refused the authority and jurisdiction of pretended general assemblies, and continued in an independent state till the Lord gave them a free and faithful general assembly: Likewise, we will turn to the approved footsteps of the Protestant reformed churches, as they are pointed out unto us in our first Confession of Faith, where we have the characters of that church unto which we may safely and warrantably join ourselves, namely the true preaching of the word, or the maintenance and profession of the true doctrine and the true faith, the right administration of the sacraments of Christ Jesus, and ecclesiastical discipline uprightly administered as God's word prescribeth, whereby vice is repressed and virtue nourished. Yea further, we will turn ourselves to the example and footsteps of the primitive church, who refused all church-communion, both with the erroneous, and with such as countenanced or tolerated error. Yea, the seceding ministers have ground to say, We will turn to the commandments of the Lord by his holy apostles and prophets, *Isa. lii. 11. Depart ye, depart ye, go ye out from thence, touch not the clean thing, go ye out of the midst of her; be ye clean that bear the vessels of the Lord.* *Gal. v. 1. Stand fast therefore to the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free.* *2 John 8. Look to yourselves, that we lose not those things which we have wrought* *2 Cor. vi. 17. Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you.* As also, to all the scriptural commands and directions which I have already particularly named in the preceeding chapter, with many others, that give

* *Job v. 1.*

in full warrant for their present conduct and practice. And to conclude, they have likewise ground to say, We will turn that example and pattern that the faithful and true witness, who left us, who before Pontius Pilate witnessed a good confession; and the truth which in a peculiar manner he did bear witness unto, did concern his own kingly office and spiritual kingdom: As this was the truth which was in a special manner controverted and opposed by Pontius Pilate and the Jews, whatever truth is controverted or opposed in the church, whether it concerns the person or offices of the Redeemer, his followers ought to make an open profession and confession of that truth; they ought in a particular manner to bear testimony and witness unto it, according to the different stations in which they are placed, and the different characters which they bear, that they may thereby contribute their labours to render unto the exalted Head that revenue of honour, glory and praise, that is due unto him in a peculiar manner from the church militant; and that they may make *His Name to be remembered to all generations, Psal. xlv. 17.*

C H A P. IV.

Wherein the injurious Reflections cast upon the reformation Period of this church betwixt 1638 and 1650, by the Author of the Essay, are considered.

Have in the last section of the preceeding chapter narrated, that, when the judicatories of this national church were depending in their ecclesiastical capacity for the crown-rights of the Redeemer the only King of Zion, and when they were struggling for the preservation of that reformation purity they once attained unto, and for the maintenance of the government, worship and discipline of our Lord's house; they were born down by more than ordinary violence from the civil powers, assisted by some ambitious and time-serving church men. This violence, tyranny and oppression continued for about the space of forty years; when, in the midst of the miseries and calamities under which the church

church of Scotland groned, the Lord was pleased, in a suprising and wonderful manner, to turn back the captivity of his people in this land. When the prelates were in the height of their power and pride, and when the church was like Israel in the straits of Pihahiroth betwixt Migdol and the sea, an unexpected deliverance was given her in the year 1638. And, for some years thereafter, the glory of the Lord did shine upon this church; *She look'd forth as the morning, fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners.* I know none of the Presbyterian denomination in Scotland, that have not both writ and spoke honourably of this period, till the author of the *Essay on Separation* appeared upon the field, who under a pretence (Pref. p. 5.) that the faults of the church of Scotland from 1638 to 1649 should be searched out, confessed, mourned over, and testified against, as much as her faults 1650 or 1651, and other times under this pretence, I say, he loads the assembly 1638, and other assemblies of that period, with very unwarrantable and odious proceedings: He speaks frequently in a very diminutive manner of that reforming period; he tells us, *That some do reckon it the purest times of presbytery*; he calls it an *extended period*, *Essay* p. 199, &c. and, p. 21. says he, "All our Separatists wonderfully magnify the acts of assemblies during that period." Tho' I judge it my duty to make honourable mention of the foresaid period, and to esteem it as a reforming period of this church; yet, if any reckon it faultless, or extol it above measure, I shall not vindicate them. But I may safely say, that the associate presbytery, who are reckoned by our author amongst the Separatists, have kept within just bounds, when they express themselves in the following manner, in their judicial *Act and Testimony*, p. 18. "But, since the church while militant is in an imperfect state, it is not hereby intended to affirm, that under the above mentioned period there was nothing defective or wanting to the beauty and order of the house of God, or that there was nothing culpable in the administration: All that is designed by the above particular deduction is, to declare that this church endeavoured, and mercifully attained, a considerable pitch of reformation during the foresaid period towards this their several contendings and wrestlings, their solemn vows and engagements, their declarations and testimonies, all pointed." In the above words, the presbytery affirms

the judicatories of this church endeavoured, and mercifully attained, a considerable pitch of reformation during the period mentioned; and they give several particular instances of this: I find none of them controverted by our author, except the last, viz. an act past in parliament 1649, which I consider in its proper place. The presbytery likewise maintain, That the several contendings and wrestlings, the solemn vows and engagements, the declarations and testimonies of this church during that period, all pointed towards reformation: And this is what our author cannot refuse, tho' he has not done that justice to this reforming period as to acknowledge so much. And, from what I have observed in the preceding chapters, I hope the unprejudiced reader may see, that the general tendency of the judicatories in the present period is towards deformation: They are so far from holding fast what we have received, and from contending towards further reformation, that they are letting slip these things which we have attained, and are justifying themselves in their several defections and backslidings. This one observation is sufficient for the vindication of what is asserted with respect to our reforming period, in the presbytery's *Act andimony*. But I judge it my duty to endeavour to do justice to that despised period of our reformation by considering more particularly the treatment that the author of the Essay has given the assembly 1638, and other famous assemblies: And, in order to this, I shall premise a short historical account of that wonderful turn the foresaid year. 'Tis, as I have already observed, a considerable loss unto this church, that we have not a full and compleat history of that period: However, we shall make use of such helps as I have at hand, and, amongst others, of the Latin history, entitled, *Historia Motuum in Regno Scotiae*, or, *The History of the Commotions in the Kingdom of Scotland*, &c. This history was writ, according to some, by Mr. Spang; but, according to others, by Mr. Bailie, who was first minister at Kilwinning, and a member of the assembly 1638, and afterwards principal of the college of Glasgow, and one of the commissioners of this church to the assembly at Westminster: The Latin stile of the said history is agreeable to that of Mr. Bailie's in his other writings; and, indeed were, other evidences of his being the author of that history might even at this distance of time be produced. I will likewise make use of a manuscript journal of the proceedings.

of the assemblies 1638 and 1639, which I know is in the hands of severals; and it agrees every-where with the history, and may justly be reckoned of equal authority with any manuscript of this kind: Only the reader may notice, that the speeches of the members of assembly which are recorded in the journal, some of which I have transcribed, seem to have been taken in short hand when they were delivered, and therefore must needs labour under some disadvantage; yet I thought it might give some light into the proceedings of the assembly 1638, and I hope it will not be disagreeable to the reader that I have transcribed a few of them. And what I intend for the vindication of our reforming period from 1638 to 1649, I shall cast into the following sections.

S E C T. I.

A short Historical Account of that glorious Appearance of Christ for the Church of Scotland in the Year 1638.

BEFORE I give a particular account of that remarkable turn of affairs in this church and land in the year 1637 and 1638, I do not reckon it amiss to take notice of those things by which the Lord paved a way for this great and glorious revolution.

Tho' the persecution was hot against some eminent ministers, yet many, by the special providence of God, had a peaceable residence at their several pastoral charges: Some of them were protected by persons of considerable distinction; and not a few of the first rank in Scotland did distinguish themselves by a concern for the purity of gospel ordinances; and before the year 1638, the pride and ambition of the Prelates rendered them odious to many of the first rank and quality in Scotland. And, besides, severals both of the nobility and gentry retained a love and regard to our reformation principles, and therefore many eminent ministers were countenanced and protected in the peaceable exercise of their ministry: Among others, Mr. David Dickson minister at Irvine, after he was deprived by the high commission court, and confined to Tynningrass in the north, was, thro' the Earl of Eglington's intercession, liberate from his confinement, and restored unto the exercise of his ministry at Irvine. Likewise, tho' the violence

the bishops before the year 1638 was great, yet it was nothing like the tyranny and fury of the Prelates in the late times of Prelacy, as the reader may see from Mr. Woodrow's story, where, stating the difference betwixt the Prelates in the late times and the former bishops, he observes *, " That the old sett of bishops made by the parliament 1612 were but pigmies to the present high and mighty lords." Hence many faithful ministers, who did not countenance the diocesan synods, had yet peaceable residence in their own parishes; the Lord made *the wrath of man to praise him, and the remainder of wrath he did restrain*. And here I cannot but note one thing which paved a way for the above great turn of affairs, and by which the Lord prepared a people for himself; namely, The remarkable success that did attend gospel-ordinances under the ministry of such faithful gospel-ministers at this time, who had not conformed to Prelacy. The author of the *Fulfilling of the Scriptures*, p. 416. reports, *That there was a very solemn and extraordinary out-letting of the Spirit about the year 1625 and thereafter in the west of Scotland, and particularly under the ministry of Mr. Dickson at Irvine*. As also, he mentions that solemn communion at the kirk of *Wots*, *At which time* (says he) *there was so convincing an appearance of God, and down-pouring of the Spirit, even in an extraordinary way, that did follow the ordinances, especially the sermon on Monday, with a strange unusual motion on the hearers, who in a great multitude were there convened of diverse ranks, that it was known* (which, adds he, *I can speak on sure ground*) *near five hundred had at that time a discernible change wrought on them, of whom most proved lively Christians afterwards, &c.*

Likewise, about this time solemn fasts were observed throughout the land, on account of the present dismal and deplorable state of the church of Scotland. Here I shall transcribe the testimony of an adversary, viz. bishop Guthrie, who in his memoirs, p. 8. speaking of the honest ministers of that period, he tells us, *They laboured to increase the number of their hearers every where, and that not without success especially in Fife, and in the western parts: Whereunto* (says he) *they then begun, proved very conducive; and so it was: They kept sometimes every year a fast in every*

P 2

kirk

kirk thro'out the kingdom, where the ministers were of the stamp, viz. upon the first Sabbath of every quarter; where there was no public intimation, save that the ministers did privately desire so many of their flock, as from time to time they could draw over to their party, to join in it: And, upon the days of fasting, they used in their doctrine to hint at the danger of religion by Prelacy, and the dependencies thereof; in their prayers to supplicate for remedy, with a blessing on all good means which providence should afford for that end; which course they prevailed much upon the commons. The perfidious and apostate Prelate does every where in his memoirs misrepresent the proceedings of faithful ministers before and after the year 1638; but from his above words we may gather what was true matter of fact, viz. That honest ministers at that time kept solemn fasts, for mourning over the sins and backslidings of the land, and for prayer to the Lord for a revival unto his work in Scotland; and the Lord was pleased to give a gracious return unto their prayers in the year 1638. I proceed now to give as short an account as I can of the beginning and progress of that remarkable appearance of the Lord in the fore said year.

In the year 1637, a liturgy with a book of canons framed by the bishops of Scotland, king Charles I. resolved however disagreeable they were unto a great many in the church of Scotland, to impose the same upon that church. His design is now open and declared, to bring the church of Scotland unto a full conformity with the church of England. The liturgy devised for Scotland was in several particulars worse than the English liturgy, and more agreeable to that of the church of Rome: The Latin historian gives some instances to this purpose*. And, by the book of canons designed to be imposed upon the church of Scotland, presbyteries and sessions which yet subsisted were wholly suppressed. When our night was most dark, behold, the day breaks; when our strength seemed to be quite gone, the Lord of hosts awoke for his oppressed heritage, his right hand and his arm did work deliverance for them: When the liturgy was first imposed upon Scotland, a shaking began amongst dry bones; this shaking did wax louder and louder, and bones came together bone unto bone, and lo, the sinews

* Hist. Mot. p. 35.

on them, and the skin covered them above; and the Spirit of the Lord did enter into ministers and professors, and into all ranks of persons thro' the land.

According to king Charles I his express orders, the liturgy is first opened in the great church of Edinburgh by the king, with the assistance of the bishop of that diocese, upon the 23d. of July 1637: But, the most part of the people rising at that instant, the reading was stopt, and in like manner at another of the churches, where the bishop of Argyle was attempting to read it. Within a short time supplications were given in to the council, against the liturgy and book of canons, by several ministers and professors thro' the land; and a few weeks the most part of the nobility and gentry, and the most part of the royal boroughs, declared themselves against the above impositions upon the church of Scotland. In the month of September the foresaid year, a great number of ministers with elders convene at Edinburgh, and supplicate the council against the same: Likewise several petitions signed by persons of all ranks, against the service-book and the book of canons, were put into the hands of the Duke of Lennox, who was then going to the court, that he might present them to the king; and in the mean time the privy council discharged the bishops to press the liturgy, till the king should be informed about the present state of matters in Scotland: Upon which, the ministers and elders that were met at Edinburgh retired unto their several dwellings. The elders, who upon this occasion came with the ministers to Edinburgh, consisted (according to the Latin historian) of the nobility, and of the chief magistrates of the burghs; and he reports*, that, upon their return home, "Public fasts were kept, that the Lord might turn the counsels of the king unto the public good of this church and kingdom, and that he might disappoint the projects then on foot against the church of Scotland, so much shaken already by the subtle devices of her adversaries."

The return to the above supplications, and informations from the privy council, came down from the king in the month of October. Upon this occasion there was a vast concourse from all parts of the country to Edinburgh; according to the bishop in his memoirs, p. 24. "Multitudes of

“ people from several parts of the land flocked to Edinburgh
 “ to join in supplicating; and that so generally, that besides
 “ the increase of noblemen, who had not been formerly there
 “ there were few or no shires on the south of the Grampian
 “ hills from which came not gentlemen, burghers, ministers
 “ and commons.” But no favourable answer was given to
 the supplications that had been sent up to the king; and a
 proclamation was issued forth, charging all the supplicants to
 depart out of the town within twenty four hours under the
 pain of rebellion: As also, the court of session and the privy
 council were ordered within a set time to remove from Edinburgh.
 But, notwithstanding of the above proclamation, the petitioners
 continued in the town, their numbers did daily increase, and by
 this time all the burghs except Aberdeen had declared themselves
 against the above innovations in the worship of God: And when
 the petitioners saw that their former supplications were not
 regarded, and when they considered that the cause in which they
 had interested themselves was a public and common cause, they
 resolved that they would add no more in a separate capacity
 as hitherto they had done, but in a more unite and joint capacity.
 And, about this time these meetings were formed which were
 commonly called the *tables*; they consisted of the nobility, of the
 gentlemen from the shires, and of magistrates from the burghs,
 and of ministers from all corners of the land. These meetings did
 not assume to themselves any juridical power, but were held for
 consultation and mutual advice, with respect to the proper
 measures that should be taken for the redress of their present
 grievances.

After the above proclamations were made, a petition was
 agreed upon to be given in to the privy council, containing a
 complaint against the bishops as authors of the liturgy and of
 the book of canons, as renters of the church, and underminers
 of religion, as movers of discontent between the king and his
 subjects, and of discord between subject and subject: And in
 regard the most part of the bishops were members of the
 privy council, they not only craved that the above charge
 against them might be put to the trial, but also they stated
 them as parties, and crave that they be not suffered to sit
 any more as judges until the cause is tried and decided
 according to justice *. The Latin historian reports,

* *Rusworth's Collect.*

that a vast number of all ranks subscribed the above petition and complaint, and that it was adhered to by all who had it at heart to assert the liberties of the church, and the purity of divine worship, in opposition to the tyranny of bishops and superstition*.

The number of the petitioners did daily increase at Edinburgh, and the privy council had none to support their authority; all Scotland almost being now engaged on the side of the petitioners, the bishops and their adherents were become a despicable party: But, in regard it was judged inexpedient that such numbers should continue in Edinburgh, as also because the council were offended at such numerous meetings, therefore it was agreed betwixt the privy council and the petitioners, that some few should be chosen by the petitioners themselves out of their own number, to remain at Edinburgh, there to attend upon an answer to their several petitions, supplications and complaints. In consequence of this agreement and resolution, the nobility chose four out of their number; the shires, the burghs and the ministers did in like manner each of them choose four to remain at Edinburgh for the end above mentioned, as also to give intelligence thro' the country as should be found necessary from time to time. I judge it not improper that I here narrate what is reported by the Latin historian †, viz. That, before they parted from Edinburgh, "they came under solemn promises and engagements each of them for personal reformation, as also that they would be instant in fasting and prayer, that the Lord would turn away his anger from his people, and that he would be graciously pleased to turn the heart of the king to such counsels as might be for the glory of God, the honour of the crown, and the peace and safety of his subjects."

The privy council informed the king concerning the petition and complaint against the bishops; and, by an express sent down in the beginning of December, the king discharges the council to meddle any more in that matter: Whereupon, the deputies from the petitioners resolved upon a protestation to be given in to the council, bearing that they had tried all peaceable measures without success, and that it might be warrantable for them to use their endeavours for the preservation of the liberties of the church; as also, declaring, that if any

P 4

tumult

* *Hist. Mot.* p. 36.† *P.* 38.

tumult arose, thro' their prosecution of the cause, the council only might be blamed, as refusing justice. When the privy council heard of the above protestation, they agreed to give the deputies a hearing, and in the mean time advise the bishops to withdraw from the council.

The privy council being met at Dalkeith on 21st of December, the deputies from the several petitioners compared before them: And that religious and truly noble patriot, the Lord Lowdon, did, in a very eloquent speech, justify the proceedings of the petitioners, and insisted that the bishops might be tried according to law and justice, and offered to prove them guilty of grievous crimes, in name of the said petitioners, under their highest peril; he likewise obtested the privy council, that without further delay they would evidence to the whole nation their regard to justice and the purity of religion. The speech of this noble lord is followed by another from one of the ministers, who put them in mind of the curse that is pronounced upon Meroz, if they should withdraw their helping hand from the church in her present situation; as also, that the Lord hath said, *Him that honoureth me I will honour, and those that despise me shall be lightly esteemed*: He likewise told them, That, if in this perilous time they should hold their peace, deliverance and enlargement would come to the church from some other airth. The Latin historian adds*, That the minister insisted upon the above places of scripture, and applied them in such a pathetic manner, as drew tears from several members of council. The answer which the privy council gave to the said deputies or commissioners was, That they were bound up by the king's express orders from meddling in these matters; and they likewise expressed their grief and sorrow that they could not satisfy the desires of the petitioners, and therefore told them to wait yet patiently for a short time, till they should again inform the king about the present posture of affairs. Accordingly the privy council wrote unto the king; and the king sent for the Earl of Traquair, that he might have a more particular information from him concerning the state of matters in Scotland.

In the month of February 1638, the Earl of Traquair returned from court, and he went to Stirling, where the privy council was sitting, where a proclamation was published in

* *Hist. Mot. p. 40.*

the king's name, wherein the king owned the liturgy and the
 book of canons, and declared they were not contrary to the
 laws of the land; as also, that the liturgy was a ready mean
 to maintain the true religion already professed: Likewise, the
 said proclamation condemned the meetings of the supplicants
 and conspiracies contrary to the laws of the land, and dischar-
 ged all such meetings of the subjects to be held either in Stir-
 ling or in any other burgh where the privy council or court
 of session should sit. The petitioners prepared a protestation
 against the above proclamation, which was read by the Earl
 of Home and Lord Lindsay, accompanied with a great croud
 of nobles and people, and affixed on the cross of Stirling;
 and instruments were taken thereupon in the hands of a pub-
 lic notary *. In the said protestation, they protested against
 the books of liturgy and canons, as manifest innovations, and
 full of errors and superstition; and likewise against the privy
 council's refusing to receive libels against the bishops: They
 protested likewise against the high commission court, as a
 court obtruded on Scotland contrary to the fundamental laws
 of the land; as also, that the bishops should not be judges in
 their own cause: And they further protested, that their
 meetings and supplications were lawful and warrantable, being
 only intended against the tyranny of the bishops, and for the
 just rights and liberties of the church, and against the nova-
 tions lately obtruded upon her; and therefore, that it should
 be warrantable for them to continue these meetings for the a-
 fore ends and purposes. And finally, they protested, that
 they could not with a good conscience forbear the said meet-
 ings, unless they should wrong the glory of God, and betray
 the honour of the king, and the liberties of church and king-
 dom.

The deputies at Edinburgh had sent intelligence unto the
 petitioners thro' the nation, concerning the present state of
 matters: And, upon this occasion, a great number of noble-
 men, gentlemen, ministers and others convened at Stirling;
 according to bishop Guthrie in his memoirs, they were re-
 counted above two thousand in number. They resolved, upon
 the above proclamation that was made discharging them to
 continue in Stirling under pain of rebellion, to depart peace-
 ably to Edinburgh. And here I must inform the reader, that
 they began now to testify in a more plain and more solemn
 manner

* *Rapine's Hist. Vol. 2. p. 302. Folio.*

manner for the liberties of the church of Scotland, and reformation-purity. The proclamation that I have mentioned had a quite contrary effect to what was intended and designed by the king and the Prelatic party: It issued in a public acknowledgement of their breach of covenant, and in the return of all ranks of persons thro' the land unto the Lord, for the renovation of their solemn national engagements; and this was done, both with deep mourning, and with great joy. I shall here transcribe what the several writers I have before me report upon this extraordinary occasion.

The paper I have formerly mentioned, entitled, *A Short Relation of the State of the Kirk of Scotland*, published in 1638, narrates, That "the whole nobility, gentry, barons, roughs, ministers and commons, who had now so often supplicate, and so long attended, were cast into great difficulties; considering their religion, so well warranted by God's word, and established by the laws of the kirk and kingdom, was now begun to be changed, both in doctrine and discipline, at the pleasure of the fourteen bishops; the liberties of the country like to be infringed by their usurpation; and, having complained often upon them to his majesty by his council, were answered by the former declaration, viz. at Stirling. — All these did move the supplicants to bethink the renewing of the national covenant of this kirk and kingdom (the breach whereof hath been a special cause to bring these evils upon them) as a good mean for obtaining the Lord's wonted favour, having many examples in holy scripture, that the people of God have happily renewed their covenant with God." The *Apologetic Relation*, p. 47. reports, That, being "commanded to depart forth of the town of Stirling; they go together towards Edinburgh; and there, after serious thoughts they find the main procuring cause of all these calamities to be the violation of the national covenant, and therefore they unanimously resolved to renew that covenant." The Latin historian reports*, "That a numerous company went from Stirling to Edinburgh, advertising their associates, that they should come quickly thither, in order to deliberate on such things as might make for their common safety: And when they called to mind, that the chief cause of all these calamities, both of old and of late, was the breach of

* *Hist. Mot.* p. 43.

the national covenant that had been made with God, they unanimously conclude upon a solemn renovation of the same." But the account that is given by the church of Scotland, their letter to the churches of Helvetia in the year 1640, concerning this important matter, deserves to be noticed. This excellent letter contains a succinct account of the state of the church of Scotland from her reformation till the year 1640; and, concerning this remarkable turn in the year 1638, they express themselves, in the following manner: "For when, by the king's proclamation, ministers and people were cast into such straits, that they were forced either to fly under the charge of rebellion, or to embrace that liturgy, contrary to the oath, faith, and laws of church and country; it came to pass, that the estates of the kingdom, whose patience was for a long time benumbed in bearing with the bishops, being awakned with the news of this liturgy, did take counsel concerning extirpating corruptions, and restoring their antient purity. Therefore they insisted by many supplications, intreating, beseeching, and exhorting his most serene highness the king, and his honourable council, that they would succour the afflicted church, and call the bishops to an account, who were the authors of so great mischiefs: But while they perceived that no redress was given them, and that no answer was returned unto their petitions, and that their demands were not regarded, they entred more deep within their own breasts, searching into the recesses of their souls; and the remembrance of their breach of covenant did sting, wound and pierce thro' their consciences: Wherefore, being moved with serious repentance, they resolved to renew their covenant or national confession, which was at first signed with all their hands: (*viz.* of the general meetings or estates of the kingdom;) then, a solemn fast being appointed, it was publicly ratified in the churches, by swearing with their right hands lifted up, with deep groans and tears *." Here the reader may see the estates of the kingdom *ordines regni*, so they are designed in the letter, as also the whole nation, under strong convictions and deep sorrow and mourning. What was the ground and reason of all this sorrow and mourning? was even their breach of covenant. But, wherein were they

* *Hist. Mot. ad sup.*

they guilty of breach of covenant? They had never subscribed to the liturgy, nor to the book of Canons; they had always opposed them, and testified against them: Therefore this sorrow for the breach of their covenant was on account of the course of defection that had been carried on for about thirty years bypast, by the rearing up of Prelacy, and by the five articles of Perth, and what compliances there had been with the same.

When the petitioners had met at Edinburgh, and had resolved to renew the covenant as is above declared; the covenant, as it was framed by the general meetings, consisted of three parts. They first inserted the national Confession of Faith without any alteration, as it was compiled and sworn to the year 1580 by the king and his household, and thereafter by persons of all ranks in the year 1581, according to an ordinance of the privy council, and an act of the general assembly; and again by all sorts of persons in the year 1590.

Immediately after the above national confession, the general meetings did insert a great many acts of parliament in favour of the reformed religion, in doctrine, worship and discipline. These acts of parliament were inserted at that time by the meetings at Edinburgh, to justify their proceedings before the world, and to shew, that they were not acting contrary to the laudable laws of the land, but that they had law on their side, even tho' the court was opposing their present proceedings. And here I must observe, that it is a mistake that many are under, when they affirm, That the several acts of parliament mentioned are a part of the oath of the covenant; for all that is intended by them is to prove the legal warrant that the covenanters had for their present proceedings. And the king's coronation oath is inserted among the rest, so it would be ridiculous to say that the subjects swore the coronation oath.

After the above acts of parliament, instead of the general bond which was subjoined to the covenant in the year 1590, the meetings at Edinburgh subjoin a new bond, whereby the national Confession of Faith or covenant is accommodated to their circumstances at that time. This was done after the example of their worthy and religious progenitors, who in the said 1590 had signed the covenant, with a bond agreeable to their situation and circumstances in the foresaid year. In the

did that was agreed upon in the year 1638, they condemn
 the innovations and evils contained and particularly mention-
 ed in their late supplications, complaints and protestations; as
 having no warrant of the word of God, and also as contrary
 to the articles both of the large Confession of Faith, and of
 the national confession or covenant. With respect to the in-
 novations in the worship of God, viz. by the five articles of
 Perth, and the corruption of the public government of the
 kirk, and the civil places and power of kirkmen, they bind
 themselves to forbear the practice of all such novations, till
 they be tried and allowed in free assemblies and in parliaments.
 And they further engage "to labour, by all means lawful, to
 recover the purity and liberty of the gospel, as it was esta-
 blished and professed before the foresaid novations." 'Tis
 plain, that, by the above words of the bond, the five articles
 of Perth, the government of the kirk by bishops, &c. are
 virtually condemned; in regard they are called Novations, and
 under the foresaid novations that purity and liberty of the gos-
 pel, as it was formerly established and professed, was want-
 ing. But yet the general meetings do not expressly condemn
 the above novations as contrary to the Confession of Faith,
 but refer the question to the determination of a free and law-
 ful general assembly; in regard severals doubted if the nova-
 tions mentioned were contrary to our national Confession of
 Faith: And as the general meetings did not act in a judicative
 capacity, so they thought it proper to refer the question to the
 determination of an assembly, especially when they had now
 the hopes of having such a free and lawful assembly to whom
 they might safely refer a question of this nature. But it is
 here to be noticed, that such as were in the dark upon this
 question, were willing to submit the same to the trial and de-
 termination of a free and lawful assembly; and hereby they
 likewise declared themselves willing to ly open unto light up-
 on the above important question. The Latin historian * men-
 tions them as a considerable number, who either reckoned the
 foresaid novations indifferent, or who doubted if they were
 condemned by our national Confession of Faith: But, as that
 learned author was the only member of the assembly at Glas-
 gow who did hesitate when the questions were determined
 concerning the government of the kirk by bishops, and the
 five articles of Perth; so he seems to magnify the numbers,

as is evident from what is already observed concerning the proceedings of the general meetings, and may yet more fully appear from what I am further to offer upon what passed this year.

Besides what concerned the above-mentioned novation, the bond subjoined to the covenant contains a qualified allegiance to the king, viz. an engagement, to "stand to the defence of our dread sovereign the king's majesty his person and authority, in the defence and preservation of the foresaid true religion, liberties and laws of the kingdom:" and also, they bind themselves to the mutual defence and assistance one of another, in the same cause of maintaining the true religion and his majesty's authority. They likewise "swear by the great name of the Lord their God, to continue in the profession and obedience of the foresaid religion; and that they shall defend the same, and resist all the contrary errors and corruptions specified, according to their vocation, and to the utmost of that power that God hath put in their hands, all the days of their life." In like manner they bind themselves to a life and conversation as becometh Christians who have renewed their covenant with God; and that both in public, and in their particular families and personal carriage, they shall endeavour to keep themselves within the bounds of their Christian liberty; and also to be good examples to others, of all godliness, soberness and righteousness, and of every duty to God and man.

As the above is the sum and substance of the bond which the general meetings at Edinburgh subjoined, so the covenant with the said bond was sworn with great solemnity on the first of March 1638, in the Gray-friars church of Edinburgh. The flower of the nation were present; this solemn meeting consisted of the nobility, of the barons and gentlemen from the several shires, of burgesses from the burghs, with ministers and others; and thereafter copies of the covenant were sent thro' the whole nation. According to the Latin historian *, it was sworn thro' the whole land before the end of April, except by Papists, who were then but a very inconsiderable party; as also excepting such who were addicted to the English ceremonies, and who favoured the book of canons and liturgy, amongst whom he reckons the Aberdeen doctors and ministers: He mentions also others who at their entrance

ance into the ministry had engaged to the observance of the articles of Perth. But the *Apologetical Relation* reports, p.

7. "That in a short time few in all the land did refuse, except some Papists, some aspiring courtiers who had no will to displease the king, some who were addicted unto the English rites and ceremonies, and some few ministers who had sworn the oath at their entry appointed by the parliament anno 1612." Mr. Rapine informs us*, "That the innovations introduced into the church for thirty or forty years past, were disapproved by almost the whole kingdom." and, having insert the above-mentioned bond, he adds, "This covenant, like an alarm-bell, brought all the Scots together that were dissatisfied with the government, that is, almost the whole nation! It was subscribed by the great men and the people, except the privy counsellors, the judges, the bishops, and such ministers as were dignitaries in the church."

I have already given an account, from the letter to the churches in Helvetia, after what manner the covenant was sworn at this time. Tho' the said testimony is sufficient, yet I shall subjoin a few more, who take notice, not only of mourning, but also of great joy thro' the land upon this solemn occasion, with great readiness and willingness in coming under the oath of God.

The first I shall mention is bishop Guthrie in his memoirs, p. 30. where he tells us, That "upon the first of March 1638, they being all assembled in the Gray-friars church and church-yard, the covenant was publicly read, and subscribed by them all with much joy and shouting. He adds, The archbishop of St. Andrews being then return'd from Stirling to Edinburgh, when he heard what was done, said, *Now all that we have been doing these thirty years past is thrown down at once.*"

The *Apologetic Relation*, p. 48. informs us, "That the covenant, being read in the churches, was heartily embraced and sworn, and subscribed with tears, and great joy." He adds, great was this day of the Lord's power; for much willingness and cheerfulness was among the people." Likewise, Masters Alexander Henderson and David Dickson, in their first answer to the replies of the Aberdeen doctors and ministers, say, "And for that which displeaseth you in our way, that we deal after such a manner with people to come

* *Hist. Vol. 1. Fol. p. 303.*

" in (*viz.* to the covenant): We answer, That we have
 " in this land *the day of the Lord's power*, wherein his peo-
 " ple have most willingly offered themselves in multitudes
 " like, the dew of the morning: That others of no small
 " note have offered their subscriptions, and have been refus-
 " ed, till time should try that they join in sincerity; from
 " love to the cause, and not from the fear of men: And thus
 " no threatnings have been used, except of the deserved judg-
 " ment of God: nor force, except the force of reason, from
 " the high respects which we owe to religion, to our king,
 " to our native country, to ourselves, and to the posterity,
 " which hath been to some a greater constraint than any ex-
 " ternal violence, and we wish may also prevail with you."

And from the foresaid answers we may also see, that this so-
 lemn work was carried on with fasting and humiliation thro'-
 the land: In the first and eleventh answers 'tis said, That the
 Aberdeen ministers declined to concur with the rest of the
 Kirks of the kingdom in public humiliation and fasting. I
 shall only add the testimony of that eminent minister, Mr.
 Livingston, who in his life writ by himself, p. 22. reports,
 " I was present at Lanark, and at several other parishes, when,
 " on a Sabbath after the forenoon's sermon, the covenant was
 " read and sworn; and may truly say, that in all my life-
 " time, except one day at the kirk of Shotts, I never saw such
 " motions from the Spirit of God; all the people generally,
 " and most willingly concurring: I have seen more than a
 " thousand persons all at once lifting up their hands, and the
 " tears falling down from their eyes; so that thro' the whole
 " land, except the professed Papists, and some few who for
 " base ends adhered to the Prelates, the people universally
 " entred into the covenant of God, for reformation of religi-
 " on against Prelates and the ceremonies."

Reader, stop here, and behold the nobility, the barons, the
 butchers, the ministers and commons of all sorts in Scotland,
 all in tears for their breach of covenant, and for their backslid-
 ing and defection from the Lord, and at the same time return-
 ing with great joy unto their God, by swearing cheerfully and
 willingly to be the Lord's. It may well be said of this day,
 Great was the day of Jezreel: It was a day wherein the arm of
 the Lord was revealed, a day wherein the princes of the peo-
 ple were assembled, to swear fealty and allegiance to that
 great King whose name is the Lord of hosts: It was the day

the Redeemer's power, wherein his volunteers flowed un-
 him; even the day wherein his youth were like the dew
 from the womb of the morning. If we compare our present
 times with the above day of the right hand of the Most High,
 why we not take up a lamentation over our land, and cry,
Scotland, Scotland, how is thy gold become dim! how is
thy most fine gold changed! Where is that zeal for the Re-
 deemer's honour and glory, that was once warm in the breasts
 of thy nobility, thy barons, thy ministers and commons?
 Where is that heroic courage and resolution for the cause of
 Christ, as well as for the liberties of the nation, that did at
 that time animate all ranks of persons thro' the land? Where
 art thou now? Ah! how much sunk in great degeneracy and
 defection from the Lord! Can these dry bones in Scotland
 live? The Lord only knoweth, the residue of the Spirit is
 with him. It becomes us to acknowledge that we have sinned,
 and that we have dealt treacherously in his covenant, and that
 he is righteous and holy in restraining his Spirit from us; it
 is likewise our duty to *wait upon the Lord, who hideth his*
face from the house of Jacob.

The town of Aberdeen was the only place of any conside-
 ration in Scotland that declined to join in the covenant, being
 very much under the influence of their ministers, who all ad-
 duced to the Prelatic interest: Therefore the general meetings
 at Edinburgh sent Masters Alexander Henderson, David Dick-
 son and Andrew Cant to that town, to deal with ministers and
 people in a brotherly and friendly manner, to join with the
 church and kingdom in the covenant lately sworn. And when
 the said ministers came to Aberdeen, as they report in the pre-
 sence to their answers to the Aberdeen doctors and ministers,
 they were altogether refused the pulpits and kirks; and there-
 fore they preached in a convenient place for two Sabbaths,
 and delivered their message in the audience of many, and
 they found that their labour was not vain in the Lord: "For
 (say they) diverse persons, of special note both for place and
 wisdom, with willing heart and great readiness of mind,
 did publicly put their hands to the covenant."

The king being informed of the proceedings at Edinburgh,
 and of the renovation of the national covenant thro' the land,
 sent down the marquis of Hamiltoun as his high commis-
 sioner to Scotland. The marquis was invested with this e-
 minent

minent character, as Mr. Rapine reports *, because the king imagined " he would by his credit and industry reduce the people of Scotland to his obedience, without giving them any real satisfaction, being still very unwilling to desist from his projects." When the marquis came down to Scotland he demanded, that they should deliver up and renounce the subscribed covenant: This they all honestly and boldly refused to do. Then the marquis demanded, What might be expected from them for returning to their former obedience to the king. They replied, That they could not return to his majesty's obedience, in regard they had never departed from it; and in the mean time they insisted for a free assembly and parliament.

When the marquis could not prevail upon the general meetings to give up with their subscribed covenant, he did, before he returned to court, publish a declaration from the king bearing date at Greenwich the 28th of June this year: The declaration was designed more to amuse than to give any satisfaction. By it, the proceedings of the meetings at Edinburgh are condemned, under the name of disorders and great disorders; and the king's mind with respect to the book of canons, the liturgy and high commission court, is declared very doubtful and general terms. Upon the publishing of the above declaration, a protestation is read against it at the church of Edinburgh, in the name of the noblemen, barons, &c. I find, from a copy of this protestation before me printed in the year 1638, that instruments were taken thereupon in the hands of three notars, by the Earl of Cassils in name of the noblemen, by Mr. Gibson of Dury in name of the barons, the provost of Dundee in name of the burrows, and by Mr. Ker at Salt Prestoun in name of the ministers, and by Mr. Archibald Johnston (afterwards lord Waristoun) in name of all who adhered to the Confession of Faith and Covenant lately renewed within this kingdom. In the above protestation, after several weighty grounds and reasons laid down against the king's declaration, they declare their adherence to the whole of our reformation, notwithstanding of any innovations introduced, either of old or of late: As also their adherence to the grievances, supplications, and protestations given in at assemblies and parliaments; and to the late complaints, supplicatione, protestations, &c. And likewise their hearty adherence to their oath and subscrip-

* *Hist. Vol. 1: p. 302.*

of the Confession of Faith, the Solemn Covenant between God and this church and kingdom: And, in like manner, they justify all their former proceedings, and protest against any act or deed of the privy council, carrying an approbation of the king's declaration, as unjust, illegal and null; and offer to submit their cause to the first free general assembly of the church, and parliament of the estates. The curious reader may see this protestation, at full length, together with the king's declaration in Rushworth's collections for the year 1638.

After the return of the marquis of Hamilton to the court, solemn fasts were observed thro' Scotland on account of the present state and situation of affairs, and especially upon these days wherein the king's cabinet council at London met upon the affairs of Scotland*. In the mean time, the general meetings, fearing delays, agreed to publish a paper, entitled, *Reasons for a General Assembly*; wherein they prove the necessity of a general assembly, from the present state of the church of Scotland; and that this is one of the rights and privileges that belongs to the church, from the word of God, to hold such assemblies; as also, that the church of Scotland is warranted to hold her general assemblies, by such laws of the land as had never been repealed. And they likewise argue, That when the Christian magistrate either forbiddeth, or in the urgent necessities of the church forbeareth to convene assemblies; that, in this case, the church is left to her own liberty, and must provide for her own safety: And for this they give the following reason, which deserves to be noticed; "The great wisdom of Jesus Christ, the King of the kirk, hath provided sufficient supplies for all her necessities, and fitting remedies for all her evils, of which there be many that cannot be helped without general assemblies; and therefore, not only the Christian Prince, but the pastors of the kirk, especially when the indiction cannot be obtained of the prince, are bound, as they will answer to Christ, to provide that the ecclesiastic republic receive no detriment, and to esteem the safety of the kirk to be the supreme law." The above paper is short, but very nervous and strong; and about this time the general meetings came to a resolution, that in case the king should refuse or delay to call a general assembly, that they would fall upon the most

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proper measures themselves, for convening a free national assembly of the church of Scotland.

The marquis of Hamilton returned again to Scotland about the 12th of August, and proposed from the king granting of an assembly, but upon such conditions as had evident tendency to disappoint the design of a free general assembly. Mr. Rapine reports *, " That the high commissioner perceiving he had to deal with men who were upon their guard, and that it would be difficult to surprize them, resolved to take a second journey to England, to inform the king of the state of affairs. By putting the matter in doubts (as Rapine thinks fit to call our covenanters) in hopes the king would grant such a general assembly as they desired. He fired, he obtained with great difficulty, that the election of commissioners should be delayed till his return, which was fixed to the 21st of September." Likewise the Latin historian reports †, That it was with great difficulty that they agreed to the delay, on account of the present necessity of a general assembly: But it was at length concluded, that the marquis did not return against the 22d of September, they should proceed in the election of commissioners for a general assembly.

The marquis returned from London before the day appointed; and, on the 22d of September, a proclamation was made for a general assembly to be held and kept at Glasgow upon the 21st of November, as also another proclamation for a parliament to meet at Edinburgh on the 15th of May 1690. Together with the above proclamation an act of privy council was published, commanding all to sign the national covenant or Confession of Faith, with the general bond subjoined *anno* 1589. But the general meetings at Edinburgh, perceiving, that, by the above proclamation for an assembly, a free general assembly was not intended, for this reason amongst others, because archbishops and bishops, as well as other commissioners, were warned to repair to the said assembly as members thereof; Also, they perceiving that the act of the privy council, appointing the covenant to be sworn and subscribed with the bond annexed *anno* 1589, was not the same covenant as it was lately sworn, with the bond which the said meetings had subjoin'd thereto, was upon the matter condemned: Therefore they prepare a protestation, which

* Vol. 1. p. 306.

† Hist. Scot. p. 72.

was read at the cross of Edinburgh, immediately after the above proclamations, in the midst of many noblemen, barons, gentlemen, &c. adhering to the same.

The above protestation is long, and well drawn. They first give thanks unto the king for indicting a general assembly, and declare their resolution to hold the assembly at the time appointed; then they pray, that the Lord may enlarge the king's heart, to give full satisfaction to all their grievances and complaints: After this, they declare the reasons that moved them to this protestation, and amongst others, say they, "That Christ our Lord, the King of kings, thro' our neglect or lukewarmness, may want no part of his sovereignty and dominion; and that in our religion, which is more dear unto us than our lives, we deceive not ourselves with that which cannot satisfy, &c. Then they take notice of some things in the preamble to the king's proclamation, as prejudicial to the freedom of the intended assembly; and they protest expressly against that clause in the proclamation, warning archbishops and bishops to be present as if they had place and voice there. They likewise protest against the said proclamation, commanding the bond framed in the year 1589 to be signed: Amongst other weighty reasons, they observe, That, by the subscribing of the said bond, the land would be involved in perjury; in regard it would be a departing from their testimony lately given in the bond that they had sworn and signed, whereby the national covenant was commodate to their present circumstances, and wherein theurgy and book of canons were expressly condemned: They likewise observe, That the bond 1589 was general, and not adapted to their present circumstances. And here they give some beautiful expressions upon the use and design of Confessions of Faith, which well deserve a room here, viz. What is the use of march stones upon borders of lands, the like use hath Confessions of Faith in the kirk, to discriminate and divide betwixt truth and error; and the renewing and applying of Confessions of Faith to the present errors and corruptions, are not unlike ridding of marches: And therefore, to content ourselves with the general, and to return to it, from the particular application of the Confession, necessarily made, upon the invasion, or creeping-in of errors within the borders of the kirk, if it be not a removing of the march-stone from the own place,

" it is at least the hiding of the march in the ground that
 " be not seen, which at this time were very unreasonable
 &c. After the said protestation was read by Mr. Archibald
 Johnston, according to the printed copy before me, instru-
 ments were taken thereupon in the hands of three public
 notaries, and an extract craved by the Earl of Montrose in name
 of the noblemen, by Mr. Gibson of Durie in name of the bar-
 ons, by George Porterfield burghess of Glasgow in name
 of the boroughs, by Mr. Henry Rollo minister at Edinburgh
 in name of the ministers, and by the said Mr. Johnston in name
 of all who adhered to the Confession of Faith and Covenant
 lately renewed within this kingdom; and a copy of the pro-
 testation was offered to the king's herald.

The presbyteries did now proceed to the election of com-
 missioners for the ensuing general assembly; and, according
 to the former custom and practice of elections for free and
 lawful general assemblies, Three or at least two ministers
 were chosen from every presbytery, together with one ruling
 elder *. It is then a mistake in the ingenious Rapine †, who
 following the English historians, writes, " That the general
 " meetings entered into a resolve, that the ruling elders should
 " exceed the number of ministers at this assembly." The
 general meetings did only advise the presbyteries to observe
 the laudable acts and constitutions of lawful assemblies in
 their election of commissioners. I find from the Latin histo-
 rian ‡, that the constituent members of the assembly at Glas-
 gow were 143 ministers together with professors from the uni-
 versities, and 95 ruling elders from the presbyteries and
 burghs. As the burghs were very zealous at this time,
 there is no doubt of their being well conveyed at this assem-
 bly: I find, from the manuscript journal, that 48 burghs
 were present by their commissioners; and consequently there
 were only 47 elders from the several presbyteries: Hence it is
 evident, that the proportion of elders to ministers was not
 far so great at that assembly from the several presbyteries,
 it is for ordinary in our assemblies in the present period.

The general meetings came to a resolution to libel and cite
 the bishops to the assembly at Glasgow. The English histo-
 rians give a very indistinct account of the manner of citing

* *Hist. Mot.* p. 77. *Guthrie's Memoirs*, p. 31.

† *Hist. Vol.* 1. p. 305.

‡ *Hist. Mot.* p. 294.

the bishops; Rapine, following the English historians, writes, that they were all cited by the presbytery of Edinburgh: But the following method was taken; Several noblemen, barons, gentlemen and ministers, who were not commissioners to the general assembly, gave in informations against the bishops, the several presbyteries in which they had their residence; likewise the said noblemen, &c. stated themselves pursuers of the bishops; and the presbyteries, taking the matter into their consideration, referred the whole cause unto the general assembly, and in the mean time agreed to cite the bishops to the said assembly. Such of them as were in the country and their libels put into their hands; but in regard the most part of them had fled the country, and retired into England, the libels were appointed to be read publicly on the Lord's day in the churches, and they were cited from the pulpits to the assembly that was to meet at Glasgow; and, according to the appointment, the libels were read in all the churches of Scotland. In like manner, several presbyteries prepared libels against such ministers as had been scandalous in their walk, or who had vented Arminian or Popish doctrines, or who had read the liturgy; and these were also cited to the general assembly*. Upon this remarkable turn of affairs, Mr. Rutherford was liberated from his confinement at Aberdeen, and was chosen a member of the assembly at Glasgow; Likewise, several of the episcopalian ministers having left their charges and retired into England, some eminent ministers, who had come over from Ireland, were immediately settled in their parishes; such as Mr. Blair, Mr. Livingstone and others, who were also chosen members of the said assembly.

The general assembly was opened at Glasgow on the 21st of November. That great man, Mr. Henderson minister at Auchtermuchty, was chosen their moderator. The marquis of Hamilton presented the king's commission, whereby he was appointed his majesty's commissioner to that assembly, which was read, together with a letter directed to them from the king. The first six sessions of the assembly there was nothing done, but the choice of their moderator and clerk, and the examining of the commissions from the several presbyteries and burghs. The commissioner endeavoured to embarrass them

* *Hist. Met.* p. 78, 79, 80.

them in all their proceedings, and protested against every thing of the same.

In the sixth session of the assembly, Doctor Hamilton, their procurator, gave in a protestation against and declinature of the assembly, signed by six of the bishops, to which a few ministers that were of the party adhered. This declinature, with the reasons thereof, the reader may see in Rushworth's collections. I have not seen any copy of the assembly's answers, but that which is in the Latin history; and there the curious reader may find it.

At the following seventh session, the assembly approved the registers of former free and lawful general assemblies since the reformation: Then they entred upon the consideration of the bishop's declinature; and after deliberation on the same, and several reasons offered to take off any thing in their declinature that could be alledged to have any force or weight, the question was stated, Whether or not, notwithstanding of the said declinature and protestation, this assembly was a free lawful and right constitute assembly? And, when they were about to vote the said question, the king's commissioner, after a long speech, told them that he could not any longer, in a consistency with his duty to his master, countenance them and therefore discharged them in the king's name to sit any longer, and declared that any thing done in the assembly should be of no force, and should not bind any of his majesty's subjects. The assembly knowing very well that the commissioner had a design to dissolve their meeting, a protestation was prepared and in readiness against this event, which was now put into the hands of the clerk to be read; and, while this protestation was reading, the commissioner removed. And the next day, November 29th, a proclamation was made over the cross of Glasgow, inhibiting and discharging the assembly, under the pain of treason, to continue their meeting, and also declaring all and whatsoever they should happen to do, to be null, and of no force, strength or effect. After the above proclamation was made, the protestation which was read in the assembly, and which they had approved, was likewise read at the cross of Glasgow in name of the church of Scotland, and of all the subscribers of the covenant. The reader will find both the proclamation, and the assembly's protestation, in Rushworth's collections for this year.

all only transcribe the words with which their protestation begun, viz. " We commissioners from presbyteries, burghs and universities, now convened in a free and full assembly of the church of Scotland, indicted by his majesty, and gathered together in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, the only Head and Monarch of his own church; and we noblemen, barons, &c. subscribers of the Confession of Faith, make it known, &c." Likewise, by the king's orders a proclamation is made at Edinburgh the 18th of December, condemning the general assembly at Glasgow as an unlawful meeting, and discharging all the subjects, under the highest pains, to acknowledge, or give obedience to the pretended acts and constitutions of the assembly now met at Glasgow; declaring their present meetings and acts to be illegal and unlawful, and prohibiting sessions, presbyteries and ministers, either publicly or privately, in conferences, sermons, or any other way, to authorize, approve, justify or allow the said unlawful meeting or assembly at Glasgow, &c. This proclamation at Edinburgh is answered with a long protestation in name of the assembly, and in name of the noblemen, gentlemen, boroughs, ministers and commons, subscribers of the covenant. The protestation has the same preamble with the former I have mentioned; and, in it, they justify their proceedings, and give a full answer to all the particulars alleged against them in the king's proclamation; they prove that they have law on their side in continuing to meet together, and take off the groundless aspersions and calumnies that were at this time cast upon all their proceedings:

After the commissioner had removed, the moderator, according to the Latin historian and the Journal, did speak to the assembly in the following manner; " All that are here, know how this assembly was indicted: And albeit we have acknowledged the power of Christian kings for convening assemblies, and their power in them; yet that must not derogate from Christ's right; for he hath given warrant to convocate assemblies, whether magistrates consent or not: Therefore, seeing we perceive men to be zealous of their masters commands, have not we as good reason to be zealous toward our Lord, and to maintain the liberties and privileges of his kingdom? You all know, that the work in hand hath had many difficulties, and God hath born us through them all to this day; therefore it becometh not

" us

“ us now to be discouraged for any thing that hath inter-
 “ veened, but rather to double our courage, when we seem
 “ to be deprived of human authority.”

The moderator, having thus spoke to the assembly, desired
 some others to speak: Whereupon Mr. David Dickson rose
 up, and said, “ Ye all understand that the great work now
 “ in hand hath been carried on from small beginnings; for
 “ at the first we intended only to exoner ourselves, and to
 “ leave a testimony to posterity that we bear witness to
 “ Christ’s oppressed cause. We thought the cause desperate,
 “ when we were charged to buy the service books under
 “ pain of horning; yet we gave in supplication to the council,
 “ desiring them to hear us speak against such proceedings.
 “ And, when we knew not what to do next, God hath led
 “ us on step by step, keeping us still within the compass of
 “ his word, and laws of this kingdom, for any thing we
 “ know; and we have only followed our cause, with humble
 “ supplications to our king, and protestations against that
 “ which we could not obey: And it is evident that God hath
 “ accepted our testimony, for his hands are about us still;
 “ for, if his eye had not directed us, and his hand had not
 “ guided us, we had long since been confounded in our wit,
 “ and could have done nothing for the compassing of this
 “ great work more than young children; neither could we
 “ have continued in one mind to this day. He is now to
 “ crave a solemn testimony of the kirk of Scotland, and to
 “ ask of every man, Who is his God? And we have clearly
 “ represented unto us a lesson of our fidelity to our Lord and
 “ Master, from my lord commissioner; he hath stood punc-
 “ tually to the least jot of his commission, and it becometh
 “ us to be as zealous and loyal to our God. Therefore,
 “ seeing this court is granted to us of God, under our king,
 “ and with his allowance, and a parliament indicted to war-
 “ rant all the conclusions of it; and now, that he hath drawn
 “ back his granted warrant, shall we for this be disloyal to
 “ our God, and slide from that which he hath granted? If
 “ we go not on we shall prove traitors both to God and to our
 “ king; or, if we be silent and pass from this assembly, how
 “ shall the will of God be demonstrated to our king in things
 “ controverted? There is not a mean to inform our king ful-
 “ ly and clearly, but the determinations of this assembly:
 “ Therefore we must now proceed, and so proceed, as all
 “ our

our proceedings must answer for themselves; that it may be seen that we have proceeded as good subjects to God and our king. We must either go on, or take upon us all the imputations of scandalous and turbulent persons, and grant that there have been as many wrongs as there have been false imputations laid out against us; and this were to sin more deeply, and to quit these glorious privileges which Christ hath granted unto us above all our sister churches. Seeing there is not a mean to clear ourselves before the Christian world but this, let us go on in putting over the matter upon our Lord and Master, and he shall answer for us at the court of heaven, and justify us in the eyes of all that are wise." I have transcribed the above speeches as they ly in the Journal. There were several other ministers who likewise spake to the same purpose: These speeches did put life and courage, not only into the members of assembly, but also into a multitude of spectators that were present; amongst whom, as the Latin historian* and the Journal report, was lord Erskine, son to the noble earl of Marr, then a member of the privy council, who came into the assembly, "and with tears besought that he might be admitted to sign the Covenant and Confession: He ingenuously confessed, that his conscience frequently checked him, as also admonished him, that with the first opportunity he should join himself to such a good cause; and having hitherto neglected to do so, said he, he perceived God was angry with him, and therefore desired their prayers on his behalf to the Lord, that his anger might be turned away from him." Many others followed the example of this noble youth. The above historian adds, That "the whole assembly looked upon it as a certain evidence of the divine countenance, that, when they were afraid that many should be intimidate and discouraged, and that they should turn their back upon the cause, yet at this very moment the hearts of some were so much confirmed, that being moved as it were of God, and despising all dangers, they besought to be received into the covenant." Then the moderator put the question, (according to the Journal) Whether they would adhere to the protestation newly read, and continue, tho' the assembly was now discharged? And the assembly all in one voice, except six or seven, declared solemnly,

* *Hist. Mot.* p. 110.

lemly, that with all their hearts they adhered unto the protestation; and that they resolved to continue, till the assembly (after the settling of all matters) be dissolved by common consent of the members thereof. The same thing is also reported upon the matter by the Latin historian. After this the moderator put the following question, If, notwithstanding of the bishop's protestation and declination, the assembly should hold themselves lawful or competent judges of the bishops? According to the Latin historian, the vote the affirmative was unanimous; according to the Journal three or four vote in the negative.

The Earl of Argyle, who was afterwards Marquis, tho' he was a member of privy council, and tho' he was not a member of the assembly, continued to attend all the sessions thereof; and he expressed his desire to hear the reasonings and judgment of the assembly concerning Episcopacy, and the articles of Perth: And, when the assembly determined that they were contrary to our national Confession of Faith, he declared his satisfaction with, and submission unto, their determination. This noble peer did here begin to distinguish himself, by a concern for the Redeemer's glory, and for his spiritual kingdom; and he continued steadfast unto the end, dying a martyr for the Lord's cause and testimony which he now spoused. Likewise, in the eighth session of the assembly several others of the nobility expressed themselves after the same manner with the Earl of Argyle; and upon this occasion, according to the Journal, the moderator said, *Tho' we had a nobleman to assist us, our cause were not the worse nor weaker; but there is occasion given us to bless God, that there are coming in daily in throngs.* The noblemen, and others that were pursuers of the bishops, insisted at this session, that the assembly might proceed to try and judge the bishops; and the libel against the bishop of Calloway was read, and delayed till another session: And the assembly having discussed the processes against the bishops in many sessions, as the printed acts bear, the most of them were deposed and excommunicate; four of them were deposed *simpliciter*, and two of them from their pretended Episcopal function, upon the grounds and reasons that are laid down in the printed acts. In the twelfth session, the assembly find and declare the assemblies at Linlithgow 1606 and 1608, at Glasgow 1610, at Aberdeen

16, at St. Andrews 1617, and at Perth 1618, upon the grounds and reasons mentioned in their printed acts, to have been from the beginning unfree, unlawful and null assemblies, and never to have had, nor hereafter to have any ecclesiastical authority. In the thirteenth session, they condemn the oaths exacted by the Prelates of intrants into the holy ministry, as unlawful. In the fourteenth session, the Service-book, the Book of Canons and Ordination, are all condemned by the assembly, as contrary to our Confession of Faith; and the high commission court is declared to be unlawful in itself, and prejudicial unto the liberties of Christ's kingdom. In the sixteenth session, the assembly most unanimously, and with the hesitation of one only, find and declare, that all Episcopacy, different from that of a pastor over a particular flock, was abjured by the Confession of Faith as it was sworn the years 1580 and 1581, and 1590; and therefore, that ought to be removed out of the kirk. After this unanimous sentence was passed, according to the Journal, the moderator had the following speech, which deserves a room here; "I think, says he, there be none of us here, but have been oftentimes calling upon the name of God in secret and openly, that he, and he only who was able to do it, would have been pleased to stay the course of defection that was going so fast on; and I think there be none of us that did not earnestly desire and wish to have seen a day to have taken it to consideration, whether we had transgressed the covenant of God or not, in going on in a course of defection: And now he hath granted this day wherein we may call all matters to a reckoning, which day we much longed for; and many a time have I myself besought God to stop this course of defection, and so he hath done. Many are the miseries, burdens and calamities that have been upon this poor kirk these years by-gone; and we were scorned by others, that it was for the breaking of covenant with God; and we trust it shall appear to the world when we are dead, that we have turned unto him, and renewed it again. It rests now that we be thankful unto the Lord for the same. And I trust that there are none of us that are come here with an honest mind, but they would have bought this day at a dear rate, and given a dear price for this voting, which God hath done far beyond our deserving or expectation. And our adversaries need not to say

" say that it was the votes of a number of gentlemen and
 " ders that carried all away; but, blessed be God, the
 " nisters, and every one present here, with great unanimi-
 " have gone together without any contradiction; which is
 " matter of admiration and wonder, for the which we know
 " not what we shall render unto our gracious Lord: There-
 " fore we shall not meddle with any other purpose now, but
 " go altogether, and give thanks heartily to our Lord for this
 " harmony." Here the reader may see the moderator, who
 was the mouth of this assembly, acknowledging in pathet-
 ical terms their transgressing the covenant of the Lord their God,
 and also a course of defection and backsliding from him, in
 the rearing up of Prelacy before the year 1638.

In the 17th session of this assembly, the five articles of Perth
 are declared to be abjured by the national covenant, as it was
 sworn in the years 1580 and 1590. This was also a particu-
 lar acknowledgement, that the land was involved in breach
 of covenant, in so far as the said articles had been practised or
 complied with. In the 21st session, the assembly remembering
 that they stand obliged, by their solemn oath and covenant
 with God, to return to the doctrine and discipline of this kirk,
 to restore kirk sessions, provincial and national assemblies, and
 their privileges, liberties, powers and jurisdictions, as they
 were constituted by the second book of discipline. In the 28th
 session, the assembly asserts, That this national church has
 divine as well as ecclesiastical and civil warrants, to convene
 her yearly general assemblies, and oftner as occasion and ne-
 cessity shall require. The preamble to this act mentions
 That the assembly having considered the reasons lately printed
 for holding general assemblies (which I noticed above) these
 reasons are taken from the light of nature, the promise of
 Jesus Christ, the practice of the holy apostles, the doctrine
 and custom of other reformed kirks, &c. Here the reader may
 notice, that the supremacy, as it was claimed and exercised
 at this time by the civil powers, did mainly and chiefly re-
 spect the king's sole power of indicting general assemblies;
 there was nothing of that power exercised or claimed which
 was given unto the king in the years 1662 and 1663, when
 it was declared, that the ordering and disposing of the exte-
 rnal government and policy of the church doth properly belong
 to the king, as an inherent right of the crown, &c. * The

* Char. 2. Parl. 2. Sess. 2. Act 1.

order may likewise observe, that the above act of assembly directly and expressly laid against the supremacy, as it was claimed and exercised before the year 1638; and consequently this assembly gave a free and faithful testimony, by their said act, for the rights and privileges of the kingdom of Christ, against the supremacy as it was then claimed and exercised. The assembly in that same session give yet a further testimony for our covenanted reformation, when they prohibited and discharge any of the members of this church to swear or subscribe our national Confession of Faith, according to the sense imposed upon it by the king, who had caused publish a declaration, bearing, That he did not intend nor design by his commands bearing the said Confession to be signed, with the bond 1580 subjoined, (which I have mentioned above) thereby to abjure, but to defend, Episcopal government; this the assembly declared to be directly repugnant to the genuine and true meaning of the said Confession, as it was professed in the years 1580, &c. And by their act, session 1638 they appoint the Confession and Covenant should be afterwards subscribed according to the determination of the said free and lawful general assembly at Glasgow.

Besides the processes brought before this assembly against the bishops, there were also processes laid before them from presbyteries against several ministers, either for reading the surgy, or for other scandalous practices; and many of them were deposed from the ministry, such as doctor Hamilton minister at Glasford procurator for the bishops, doctor Panther professor of divinity at St. Andrews, Mr. Mitchel minister at Edinburgh, and Mr. Gladstones at St. Andrews, with several others, as the reader may see from the Latin history. The same historian likewise reports*, That, before censure was past upon the teachers of Arminianism and other corrupt doctrine, Mr. David Dickson and Mr. Robert Bailie (and, according to the Journal, some others) had learned discourses before the assembly upon the several points of Arminianism, proving their contrariety to the holy scriptures and our received doctrine. The assembly likewise gave eight commissions to several ministers, who were appointed to meet at the places named in the several acts, for trying or judging ministers or professors in the colleges who were guilty of error,

or

* *Hist. Mot.* p. 199.

or who had submitted to the liturgy, and who refused to submit to the acts and constitutions of this assembly, or who were otherwise scandalous in their practice. And, among the last things done by this assembly, a solemn thanksgiving was appointed to be observed thro' all the churches in the land, for the success that the Lord had given unto them. There are two excellent speeches at the conclusion of this assembly, the one by the moderator, the other by Mr. David Dickson, wherein the rise and progress of this great work of God are mentioned with thankfulness to the Lord; I do not swell this book with giving even the heads of them. Likewise, at the moderator's desire, the Earl of Argyle spoke to excellent purpose. Then the assembly was concluded with prayer and singing of the 133d psalm; and they departed with the greatest harmony and joy.

I have now given an account, tho' but a very short and imperfect one, of that glorious appearance of the Lord to this church in the year 1638. The want of a full and faithful history of this wonderful turn, is a very considerable loss unto this church; and I am persuaded, that the author of the Essay, if he had been acquainted with the history of the period, would not have treated the assembly 1638 in the manner he has done. Before I close this section, I shall, to prevent repetition, take notice of some considerable differences betwixt the proceedings of this church in the year 1638, and the managements of all ranks of persons, and particularly of the general assembly 1690; and that because the associate presbytery in their *judicial Act and Testimony*, p. 38, 39, &c. make mention of some considerable omissions at the revolution; as also because the author of the Essay, p. 126, 127, &c. endeavours to vindicate these omissions, and represents this church as more faithful at the revolution than in the former period. I do not judge it needful to pursue our author in all the particulars that he alledges against the assembly 1638, some of which he repeats over and over again, and always in a manner very diminutive of our reforming period. And, before I enter upon particulars, I must observe, That when the associate presbytery, in their *Act and Testimony*, p. 37. make mention of the year 1388, they speak of the revolution that year as a *glorious and surprising appearance of God for us*, and they had good reason to do so; as likewise

they judge it their duty to *commemorate with thankfulness the*
miraculous power and goodness manifested in this wonderful work:
 was a work of God, which ought to be remembered till the
 next posterity; it was a work, whereby deliverance was gi-
 ven us from tyranny and slavery, and whereby a stop was put
 to an inundation of Popish idolatry and superstition: Yet the
 Presbyteries do justly observe, that it is to be regreted that this
 valuable season was neglected, and that the deliverance thus
 given us was not suitably improved. *Tho' he saved us*
for his name's sake, yet we provoked him at the sea, even at
the Red sea: we forgot his works, and waited not for his
help. From the historical account I have given, the reader
 may observe the following things:

1st, The Lord's work, in the year 1638, was carried on
 with fasting, deep humiliation and mourning, and acknow-
 ledgements made by all ranks of persons of the breach of our
 national covenant: Scotland at that time might be called *bochim*,
 a place of mourners; the voice of weeping and supplicati-
 on was heard amongst us, because we had perverted our way,
 and forgotten the Lord our God. But, in the year 1688,
 the estates of the nation were more concerned in securing their
 civil liberties, than in appearing for the rights and liberties of
 the kingdom of Christ, or in laying seriously to heart their
 heinous perfidy and treachery in breach of covenant, tho' this
 was highly aggravate above what it was in their period before
 1638: Neither did the ministry of the church, in their judi-
 cial capacity, lay home the particular instances of their per-
 fidy and treachery unto the estates of the kingdom, in order
 to stir them up to humiliation and mourning before the Lord.
 2^{dly}, As all ranks of persons in the land were sensible of
 their heinous defections and backslidings, in the year 1638;
 the representatives of this church, when they met in the
 general assembly the said year, they came together under a
 sense of the same: And, when some doubted if Episcopacy
 and the five articles of Perth were abjured by our national
 confession as it was sworn in the year 1581, the assembly ful-
 ly satisfied many that were in the dark upon this important
 question, and a general submission thro' the land was given
 to the determinations of the general assembly in this point.
 Further, Were not all the proceedings of this assembly, with
 respect to Episcopacy, the five articles of Perth, the oaths of

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intrants,

intrants, with others I have mentioned, a particular and express condemning of their national steps of defection? As what is affirmed by our author, that there were no fasts appointed in the years 1638 or 1639; he ought to have known that the work was carried on with fasting and humiliation and that the assembly 1638 had ground for appointing a solemn thanksgiving for the great things the Lord had done for them. And whereas he asserts, p. 136. That, when a national fast is appointed in the year 1642, they were far from being so particular as the assembly 1690: He might likewise have known, that the assembly 1638 did particularly and expressly condemn, as is above observed, the steps of defection and backsliding that had taken place before that time: But, in the act appointing the fast 1690. there is no particular nor express mention of any steps of defection as contrary to our national Confession of Faith, or our Solemn League and Covenant. When they mention the alteration of the government of the church, they say, That "Prelacy was introduced without the church's consent, and contrary to standing acts of our national assemblies;" but do not declare that it ought to be mourned over, as contrary to our national oath and Confession of Faith. But it is declared by the mouth of the assembly 1638 to be a transgressing of the covenant of the Lord and acknowledged as a course of defection from him. It is likewise told in the said act 1690, that much innocent blood had been shed; but they never tell that it was the blood of witnesses for the testimony of Jesus that was shed. Innocent blood may be shed in a land by tumult, in robberies, and quarrels, and many other ways: Therefore posterity can never know what innocent blood is intended by the said act of assembly. If our author would give credit unto the late renowned Mr. Hogg, to whose authority he frequently appeals, he tells us in his life writ by himself, That after the happy revolution, under the specious names of prudence and moderation, the testimony of former times was suppressed and that it was not thought a proper season to intermeddle with our covenants, or defections from them, that we might not give the least umbrage to those that were in the government, many of whom were not of our principles, and some had been amongst the leaders in the former persecution. Our author, p. 135. when he speaks concerning the complaints made against the church at the revolution, for not being more particular

particular in acknowledgeing steps of defection in church and state; he answers, That some things reckoned steps of defection were debatable points; "but, for other defections, in which they were clear, they have not been so silent as is alledged." And, for proof of this, he tells us, That in the act of assembly 1690 they expressly confess "the late great and general defection of this church and kingdom;" so "too general a fainting under this great defection, not only amongst professors, but also amongst ministers, yea, even amongst such who in the main thing did endeavour to maintain their integrity, in not giving seasonable and necessary testimony against the defections and evils of the time, and keeping a due distance from them." But, why does our author add what follows? *viz.* "And some on the other hand managed their zeal with too little discretion and meekness." But what is in all this express confession that our author speaks of? We are told of defections, great and general defections, fainting, indiscreet zeal; but what these defections were, we are not told. Mr. Hogg in his life tells us, when speaking of the above-mentioned complaint, *It is true, several public sins were then controverted; yet sure there were many sins beyond dispute, and the confession of these was neglected thro' carnal prudence and man pleasing.*

3dly, This whole church and land returned unto the Lord in the year 1638, by a solemn renovation of their national covenant accommodated to their situation and circumstances at that time: Thereby she not only made a solemn profession and confession of her God, in opposition unto the dishonours that were done him, and the indignities that were offered unto the ordinances of his institution, with respect to the government, discipline and worship of his house; but also she did, with the same solemnity, acknowledge and avouch the several articles of faith laid down from the word of God in our confession of Faith. But, at the revolution, the national church of Scotland was not a covenanting church; she made no such solemn profession or confession of the truths and ordinances of her God, in opposition unto a highly aggravated violation and profanation of them for the space of 28 years of unparalleled apostasy and defection.

4thly, The assembly 1638, in their sixteenth session, expressly condemn Episcopacy, as contrary to the word of God

and our national Confession of Faith: But nothing like this was done by the assembly 1690. This omission was attended with several special aggravations: As for instance, The testimony of the church of Scotland had been stated more particularly and expressly against Prelacy in the year 1638 than formerly, when the said assembly declared Prelacy to be abjured by our national covenant, and when the covenant, according to this express declaration, was afterwards sworn and subscribed by all ranks of persons thro' the land; hence the above omission in 1690 was a dropping a material part of the testimony of this church, which had been stated in such particular and express manner. Likewise, Episcopacy in its form and model was far more tyrannical as it was reared up by our Scots parliament in the year 1661, than it was in the period before the year 1638: For, as I have already observed the assembly at Glasgow 1610, which brought in Episcopacy into the church, did not allow of the bishop as a distinct officer from preaching elders; neither did the parliament 1661 which ratified the proceedings of Glasgow assembly, consider the bishop as a distinct office from Presbyters: But when Prelacy is reared up in the year 1662, as Mr. Woodrow in his history observes *, *Not only a negative, but likewise a positive is given him; and all church power and government is lodged in his sole person.* Hence Episcopacy was not only considered as a distinct office from Presbyters, but upon the matter the bishop is constituted the sole officer in the house of God. Therefore the omission of the assembly 1690 was still more aggravated, in regard the order and government of the house of God in Scotland has been much more subverted in the period before 1688, than in that before the year 1638. Likewise, by the rearing up of Prelacy in the year 1662, the church was more deeply involved in perjury than in the period before 1638; in regard it was a breach, not only of the national covenant as it was explained by the assembly 1628, but of the Solemn League and Covenant, which both the church and all ranks of persons in Scotland had sworn with great solemnity. When all these things are considered, 'tis very manifest, that the above omission at the revolution was attended with special and hainous aggravations.

It is likewise justly complained, Act and Testimony p. 40. That the assembly 1690 did not assert the

* Vol. 1. p. 118.

right of presbytery. Unto this the author of the Essay makes
 answer, Essay p. 129. "If this omission was a fault in the
 church of Scotland at the revolution, then it was much
 her fault in 1638: For tho' that assembly condemned E-
 piscopacy, as having no foundation in God's word, and as
 being contrary unto it, yet they have no express word of
presbytery as being founded upon the word of God, tho' I
 suppose it was their judgment, as 'tis well known it was the
 judgment of the church of Scotland at the revolution; and
 when by their act restoring the judicatories of this church
 to their former privileges, of December 17th 1638, ac-
 cording to the printed acts, they restored them only as they
 were constitute by the book of policy, without any express
 mention of *the divine right of presbytery*." Our author
 as a good deal of assurance, or (if I may use his own dialect)
 he is guilty of an *unaccountable imposition upon the world*,
 when he affirms, That the assembly 1638 have no express
 word of presbytery as being founded upon the word of God.
 In the preamble to that act of assembly condemning Episco-
 pacy, they say, "The assembly taking to their most grave
 and serious consideration, first the unspeakable goodness, and
 great mercy of God, manifested to this nation, in that some-
 necessary, so difficult, and so excellent and divine work of re-
 formation was at last brought to such perfection, that this
 kirk was reformed, not only in doctrine and worship, but
 also after many conferences and public reasonings in di-
 verse national assemblies, joined with solemn humiliati-
 ons and prayers to God, the discipline and government
 of the kirk, as the hedge and guard of the doctrine and
 worship, was prescribed according to the rule of God's
 word, in the book of policy and discipline, agreed upon
 in the assembly 1578, and insert in the register 1581, e-
 stablished by the acts of assemblies, by the Confession of
 Faith, sworn and subscribed at the direction of the assem-
 bly, and by the continual practice of this kirk." Is not
 our presbyterial church-government and discipline expressly
 laid down from the word of God in our book of discipline?
 And, is it not expressly asserted by the assembly 1638, in
 the above words of their act, That the said government
 and discipline was prescribed according to the rule of God's
 word, after many conferences and many reasonings,
 joined with solemn humiliations and prayer? As also,

that the same government and discipline was sworn and subscribed, at the direction of the assembly, and by continual practice of this kirk; and likewise, 'tis asserted, That the government and discipline, laid down in the foresaid book was a part of that necessary, difficult, excellent and divine work of reformation, whereby this church was at last brought to a considerable perfection. If our author should alledge that the word *presbytery* is not mentioned in the above preamble, I believe every person of judgment would despise it as a silly evasion; besides, any body that reads the act of assembly condemning Episcopacy, will see, that the whole tenor of that act asserts the divine right of Presbytery. And in the act cited by our author, restoring the judicatories of the church to their former privileges, in their preamble to the said act, the said assembly express themselves in the following terms, *And clearly perceiving the benefit that will redound to religion, by the restitution of the said judicatories; remembering also, that they stand obliged, by their solemn oath and covenant with God, to return to the doctrine and discipline of this kirk, as it was professed in the years 1580, &c.* Our author therefore greatly misrepresents this assembly, when he asserts they restored the said judicatories, only as they were constitute by the book of policy; for the assembly did restore them on account of the benefit that would redound to religion thereby, as also from a sense of the obligation they were under by their solemn oath and covenant to return to their duty; and this was a plain acknowledgement likewise, that they and the whole land had generally departed from their duty to the Lord. Further, the said judicatories were constitute, by the book of policy, under the footing of the divine right and warrant for them, as has been already observed.

5thly, The supremacy usurped before the year 1638 was not only practically condemned by all the proceedings of the assembly that year, but likewise the rights of Christ's spiritual kingdom were expressly asserted, in opposition to the supremacy as it was exercised before the said year 1638; and particularly, in their act, session 26th, concerning yearly general assemblies, the assembly expressly declare, *That this national kirk hath power and liberty, by divine, ecclesiastical and civil warrants, to convene in her yearly general assemblies, &c.* But nothing like this was done by the assembly 1690.

has been justly complained that this church at the revolution
 ever asserted her intrinsic power. To this our author an-
 swers, p. 131. That "the church of Scotland hath declar-
 ed for it (says he) I know not how often, by injoining all
 her ministers and elders to subscribe our Confession of Faith;
 whereby they have asserted the intrinsic power of the
 church." And, for proof of their asserting the intrinsic
 power of the church, he cites Chap. 31. Art. 2. which he
 transcribes: and then he adds, "If this be not a sufficient as-
 serting hereof (*viz.* of the church's intrinsic power) then
 the Westminster assembly hath been defective." But our
 author might have known, that the general assembly of this
 church *anno* 1647, in their act approving the Confession of
 Faith, did not think the foresaid article contained a sufficient
 assertion of the intrinsic power of the church, for convening
 in her synodical assemblies provincial or national; and there-
 fore in their said act they receive the Confession of Faith;
 with a declaration upon, and explication of, the above-men-
 tioned second article of the 31st Chap. of our Confession,
 wherein they assert the power of the church as it had been
 asserted by the assembly 1638. Our author in the forecited
 page observes, that the state ratified the Confession of Faith
anno 1689 (he should have said, *anno* 1690) Act 5th June
 7th. And he adds, Mr. Wodrow says, "This was a step
 of reformation never before attained to in Scotland, where-
 by the scriptural and pure doctrine of this church is embo-
 died with our civil liberties." But here that excellent hi-
 storian Mr. Woodrow is mistaken: For our first Confession
 of Faith, which likewise contained the scriptural and pure
 doctrine of this church, was as much embodied with our ci-
 vil liberties as the Westminster Confession of Faith, in regard
 our first Confession was approved by the parliament 1560;
 it is approved again by act of parliament December 15th,
 1567, and insert in the said act at large, together with the
 scripture-quotations, which was something more than was
 done by the act of parliament 1690. Likewise, the estates of
 parliament, in their act February 7th, 1649, do ratify and
 approve the Westminster Confession of Faith, the Larger and
 Shorter Catechism, and acts of assembly approving the same;
 this was also something more than was done by the parliament
 1690. The said parliament did indeed leave the acts of par-
 liament 1649, and the other acts of that period, buried un-
 der

der the *Act Refciffory*; and therefore they made an act of their own, with respect unto our Confession of Faith. The author of the Essay, p. 129. observes, That in our Confession of Faith, Chap. 30. Art. 1. 'tis asserted, *That the Lord Jesus is the Head of his church*; and that the commission of assembly 1698 assert, *That Jesus Christ is the only Head and King of his church*; and that the same thing is asserted by the assembly 1705, in their act against Mr. Hepburn: Hence he concludes, That "the brethren in asserting, p. 40. of their Act and Testimony, that the church of Scotland, neither in 1690, nor in any of her assemblies since, hath asserted Christ to be, what really he is, the alone supreme Head and King over his church; they assert that which is not fact." But, if our author had not quoted the words of the Act and Testimony after his ordinary partial manner, the reader might have seen, that he unjustly loads them with the charge of asserting what is not fact. The words of the Act and Testimony are, "Neither the foresaid assembly 1690, nor any of the assemblies of the church since that time, did, by any one formal act or statute, explicitly and judicially condemn the sacrilegious usurpation of his royal dignity, by that blasphemous supremacy arrogated during that bloody period; nor asserted him to be, what he really is, the alone supreme King and Head over his church as his free and independent kingdom." If our author can shew any formal act of assembly condemning the foresaid sacrilegious usurpation, or that supremacy that was arrogate by the king in the late persecuting times, then he may charge the associate presbytery with asserting what is not matter of fact; or if he can shew any formal act of assembly, expressly and judicially asserting the alone supreme Headship of the Lord Jesus over his church, and the freedom of his spiritual kingdom, then he may also charge the associate presbytery with asserting what is not fact. The grossest Erastians will subscribe to the above proposition of the commission of the general assembly 1698, according to their own sense and meaning of it, yea, so may the Pope of Rome himself, who pretends to be Christ's vicar and depute upon earth, viz. That the Lord Jesus is the alone King and Head of his church; and yet at the same time they all divest Christ's spiritual kingdom of its freedom, and the Erastians subordinate the same to the civil powers. 'Tis plain, that the presbytery, in the above words, assert the ne-

lest of a proper testimony for the alone Headship of Christ,
 in opposition to the wicked encroachments that the powers
 of the earth had made upon the same. Our author further
 observes, p. 127. That the general assembly 1690 " menti-
 ons the supremacy as one of the causes of falling; for,
 speaking of the sins of former times under Prelacy, they
 say, The supremacy was advanced in such a way, and to
 such a height, as never any Christian church acknowledged;
 And this is more than was done by any assembly from 1638
 to 1649: This was a plain condemning of the king's su-
 premacy, &c." But this was so far from being a plain
 condemning of the supremacy as it was exercised before 1688,
 that any who read the fore said act can never know the branch
 of the supremacy they intended. It was far from the faith-
 fulness of the assembly 1638, who, as I observed before,
 both practically and expressly condemned the supremacy as it
 was exercised at that time: And besides, the assemblies be-
 twixt 1638 and 1649 could not expressly condemn the supre-
 macy as it was exercised before 1688, because, as I have al-
 ready observed, it was never advanced to such a height from
 the reformation to their times. Our author adds, But some,
 as the brethren in their second Testimony, p. 41. will say,
 This (viz. what is said in the act 1660) was not an absolute
 condemning of all supremacy in civil rulers over the church.
 Here our author, after his ordinary manner, curtails the words
 of the brethren in their Act and Testimony: Their words
 are, Yet they (viz. the assembly 1690) do not absolutely con-
 demn that usurped supremacy, nor expressly assert the Headship
 and sovereignty of Christ, in opposition to the above-mentioned
 bold and daring invasions made upon it in the late times of la-
 mentable defection and grievous persecution. This our author
 cannot refuse; but he quibbles, when he tells us of disputes
 about the oath of supremacy among good and learned men:
 and therefore he mentions Mr. Gilletpie in his Miscellanies
 making mention of such disputes; he also quotes Burroughs,
 and the ministers of the province of London. But the reader
 may easily perceive, that all his citations are nothing to the
 purpose: For none of them do either treat of the supremacy
 as it was exercised in Scotland before the 1688; neither is it
 asserted by any of his authors, that there have been great dis-
 putes among good and learned men about the supremacy as it
 was

was exercised in Scotland betwixt the years 1662 and 1688. Our author proceeds, p. 128 to give his own judgment concerning the power of the civil magistrate in the church, or at least to tell us what he thinks all Presbyterian divines own, viz. *That the king hath not a dogmatic, nor didactic, nor a critic power, so as to make new articles of faith, to set up a new kind of worship, to license or ordain men to preach the gospel, nor to preach or administer the sacraments, nor to exercise church-discipline, nor to determine in controversies of religion, nor to make church canons and constitutions, nor to depose ministers from any part of their office.* I shall not take upon me to explain our author's school terms, or to enquire into the sense and import of what he calls a *diacritic power*; but I must observe, that our author does not give us a full enumeration of what our Presbyterian divines refuse unto the civil magistrate. As for the particular instances above given by our author, the Erastians will own, that the most of them do not belong to the civil magistrate. See Mr. Gillespie's *Aaron's Rod*, Book 2. Chap. 3. He adds, *That our Presbyterian divines own, That the magistrate has not only a defensive, but a regulating, ruling power, and also a coercive power; having much power circa sacra, tho' no power in sacra, no power that is properly, formally and intrinsically ecclesiastical, his power being only civil.* But I wish our author would explain himself concerning this *regulating, ruling power*: Tho' he asserts, that he is giving us the judgment of all Presbyterian divines; yet he has not mentioned any one of them, who express themselves in the above terms without some caution or limitation; and I humbly judge that they have such an Erastian favour, that they need some explanation. As also, when our author tells us that the magistrate has much power *circa sacra*, this likewise needs some explanation: For tho' our Presbyterian divines own that the magistrate has a power *circa sacra*, yet they always limit and qualify this power. I am afraid that under the terms, *much power, and ruling, regulating power*, the most part of what the Erastians plead for may be included, and, amongst others, the subordination of church-judicatories to the civil magistrate, the liberty of appeal from their sentences to the magistrate, as likewise what our Scots parliament 1662 ascribed unto the king, viz. the ordering and disposal of the external govern-

ent and policy of the church, and the like. If our author had faithfully represented the judgment of our Presbyterian divines, he ought to have told his reader, that they ascribe none of the above things to the civil magistrate; but, in regard our author has thought fit to wave these and the like particulars, it may give occasion to some to think that he too much favours Erastian principles: However, I shall be very far from charging him with them, or take any advantage against him from his general expressions; only, I wish he may explain himself more particularly upon this head, when he comes, according to his advertisement subjoined to his book, to publish his intended remarks upon the different sentiments and conduct of ministers relating to the affair of captain Porous.

6thly, The ringleaders of the defection and apostasy from the Lord were duly censured in the year 1638, but such were never called to an account by the assembly 1690, tho' their apostasy was much greater. As for instance, If the bishops were censured by the assembly 1638 for breaking the caveats laid down by the assembly at Montrose, the bishops of the late period were much more guilty, by their violation and breach of the national covenant, and of the Solemn League and Covenant. Again, if the bishops were censured by the assembly 1638 for their managements in the high commission court, where they pressed novations in the worship of God, and deprived and confined many eminent ministers; the bishops of the late period were yet more wicked and guilty, when they imbrued their hands in the blood of the witnesses for Christ in Scotland; the tyranny of the former bishops did never proceed unto such a prodigious height. Yea further, if the bishops of the former period, together with their adherents, were guilty of Arminian and Popish doctrines; so, if the bishops in the period before the year 1690 had been tried and judged in the same faithful manner, according to the example of the assembly 1638, many of the Prelatical clergy had been found as deep in such gross errors.

7thly, The order observed in the laudable proceedings of the assembly 1638 was inverted in the year 1690: As for instance, The assembly 1638 condemned expressly the corruptions and defections of the former period, and asserted the Presbyterian government and discipline of this church, from the book of discipline, according to the word of God and our national

national Confession of Faith or covenant; and the proceedings of this assembly are confirmed by the assembly 1639, whereby the house of God in Scotland was reared up upon scripture basis and foundation; and, after all, the civil foundation is given to our reformation by the parliament 1640: But in the year 1690 the parliament first settle the government of the church, after their own way and manner, by their act of June 7th, 1690; and the first general assembly of this church after the revolution is convened at Edinburgh October 16th of the foresaid year, and sits down upon the foresaid settlement. Hereby the due order of the house of God was inverted, in regard the settlement of the government of the church belongs in the first instance unto a judicatory of Christ met together in name of the Lord Jesus; and that which is incumbent upon the civil powers, in this case, is only to give the civil sanction unto the same. Likewise, when the first general assembly met after the revolution, they rest satisfied with the parliament's settlement of our government, and never reared up the house of God in their ecclesiastical capacity upon proper basis and foundation, viz. the holy scriptures, and in an agreeableness thereto, upon our book of discipline, and the solemn covenant-engagements of this whole church and land to the most high God. And here I must add, That the settlement of our Presbyterian church-government by the parliament 1690, as the presbytery in their act, p. 38. justly observe, *All the legal securities given to this church, in the covenanting period from 1638 to 1650, are overlooked and passed by.* And it must be regreted, that the above proceedings, and this silent submission of the assembly 1690, which gave no manner of testimony against the above omissions, was a departure from a material part and branch of the testimony of the church of Scotland. The only apology that can be made for the proceedings of this church at that time, and the silent submission under the parliament's settlement, is what is contained in the judgment that the committee of assembly 1690 give concerning the paper given in by Mr. Shiells and other ministers, viz. That it contained several unseasonable and impracticable proposals. The particular and express condemning of our national steps of defection, the renewing of our covenant, the asserting of the rights and privileges of the spiritual kingdom of Christ, &c. were at this time judged unseasonable and impracticable proposals: But, what made for proposals

proposals unseasonable and impracticable? The case stood mainly thus, A thorow reformation was not at heart with the most part; the estates of the kingdom at that time were of a quite different temper and disposition from what they were in the year 1638, they were not sensible of their defection and backsliding from the Lord; and, as Mr. Hogg observes in his *New Presbyterians, formerly persecutors or compliers, grew into great respect and power; and some got into church-judicatories, tho' they neglected inferior courts, and took no inspection of the congregation they belonged to: Thus old sufferers were born down, unless they went into a sort of political presbytery upon the revolution-footing.* He regrets in the same place, that when judicatories had the benefit of access unto crowned heads, that they did not embrace that opportunity for asserting and owning the principles for which we had suffered for many years.

I shall not further insist upon the omissions at the revolution, such as, the church's neglecting judicially to assert the perpetual obligation of the national covenant of Scotland, and of the Solemn League and Covenant of the three nations, with other particulars that are mentioned in the presbytery's Act and Testimony; in regard the exceptions that are laid by the author of the Essay against the Act and Testimony, upon these heads, are so very frivolous, that they deserve no manner of notice. Tho' I have given the above account of the differences betwixt the proceedings of the assembly 1638 and the conduct of the assembly 1690, yet I am far from affirming that the assembly 1638 was in nothing defective; while general assemblies consist of sinful and fallible men, their proceedings will be always imperfect and defective: But it is evident from the instances that I have given, that the testimony of the church of Scotland, as it was stated in former times, for our covenanted reformation, and against a course of defection from the same, was in many instances dropt or departed from in the year 1690; as also, that the church of Scotland, in her judicative capacity the foresaid year, was far from being so faithful in testifying against a course of defection and backsliding betwixt the years 1660 and 1688, as the assembly at Glasgow was, in testifying against the course of defection carried on before the year 1638; and this made some of the old men who had seen our first temple weep, when they saw the foundations of our second temple laid; tho' many of the

the younger sort, who had not been witnesses of the glory of our reforming period, rejoiced at their deliverance from Popish and Prelatical tyranny. I shall close this section with some words of Mr. Rutherford's, in his letter to the persecuted church of Ireland, dated in the year 1639, when speaking of the work of reformation in that period, he says:—

“ Alas! I fear that Scotland be undone and slain with the great mercy of reformation, because there is not here the life of religion, answerable to the huge greatness of the work, that dazzleth our eyes: For the Lord is rejoicing over us in this land, as the bridegroom rejoiceth over the bride; they call us now no more *forfaken and desolate*, but our land is called *Hephzibah and Beulah*, Isa. lxii. 4.—

“ The Canaanite is put out of our Lord's house; there is not a beast left to do hurt (at least professedly) in all the holy mountain of the Lord. Our Lord has fallen to wrestling with his enemies; and hath brought us out of Egypt; *we have the strength of an unicorn*, Num. xxiii. 22.—It is not brick nor clay, nor Babel's cursed timber and stones that is in our second temple: But our princely King, Jesus, is building his house all palace work and carved stones; it is the habitation of the Lord. We do welcome Ireland and England to our Well-beloved, &c.” This excellent person has more to the same purpose in that letter. I am sensible that I have swelled this book too much with the above historical account I have given, yet I do not grudge any small pains I have been at in searching into the conduct of our reforming fathers; and, since the author of the Essay has given me occasion to contribute my small endeavours for vindicating and clearing the proceedings of the year 1638, I hope such as have any regard for our covenanted reformation will not judge their labour altogether lost in reading the account I have given.

* *Lct. Part 2. Epist. 27.*

S E C T. II.

Wherein the injurious Reflections that are cast by the Author of the Essay upon the Assembly 1638 are considered.

Have in the preceeding section given some account of the rise and progress of that glorious appearance of the Lord in this church in the year 1638, as also of the proceedings of that famous assembly at Glasgow that same year. This assembly has been always treated with contempt by the Popish and Prelatical party; their faithful proceedings have been a grievous eye sore unto them. Our Scots parliament, by the second act of their second session *anno* 1662, do expressly condemn the assembly at Glasgow, "as an unlawful and seditious meeting; and declare, that all their acts, deeds and sentences are in all time coming to be reputed unlawful, void and null." But I never heard of any of the Presbyterian denomination in Scotland, who have not always spoke and writ honourably, and with great regard to this assembly and their proceedings, till the author of the Essay, under a Presbyterian character and profession, has thought fit to vent himself in a very indecent and injurious manner against them, while he treats several of their proceedings as unreasonable, bad and tyrannical. However, our author is sure that no law now in being, either civil or ecclesiastical, can reach him; and therefore he may deal the more freely with that solemn assembly at Glasgow: For the above act of parliament was neither repealed nor repealed at the revolution. As it condemns the assembly 1638, so, as Mr. Woodrow observes*, it casts a slur upon our excellent reformation from Popery; and therefore he justly affirms, "That 'tis a shame and reproach that it stands in the body of our Scots laws."

Before I enter upon the reflections that he throws upon the proceedings, as also upon the constituent members, of the aforesaid assembly; 'tis necessary that I examine the exceptions that are laid by our author against the national covenant, in regard this covenant was renewed with great solemnity and devotion in the year 1638, and also in regard the assembly that met at Glasgow the said year declared the true sense and meaning

* *Hist. Vol. I. p. 119.*

meaning of the covenant in some things that were controverted, and appointed it to be subscribed according to its genuine sense and meaning in all time coming, as I have narrated in the preceeding section.

With respect to the national covenant, our author gives an account of its rise, from Petrie's history, Essay, p. 63, where he tells us, "In 1580 (Petrie says) dispensations were sent from Rome, permitting Papists to promise, swear, subscribe, and to do what other things might be required of them, if in mind they continued firm to the Papist interest." Our author adds, "And according to him (viz. Petrie) these dispensations gave the first rise to our national covenant, in which Papistry is so pointedly abjured." But according to our author's indistinct way of expressing himself, some of his readers have imagined that Petrie affirms our national covenant had its rise from Rome; Therefore, to clear the matter, I shall give the reader the express words as they lie in Petrie's history*, in regard his words are both altered and very much curtailed by our author. "At that time, say Petrie, viz. 1580, were found some dispensations sent from Rome, permitting Papists to promise, swear and subscribe, and do what other thing might be required of them, so that in mind they continue firm and use diligence to advance privily the Roman faith. These dispensations were shewed unto the king: For remedy, at first he gave order to one of his ministers, John Craig, to write a form of abjuration of Papistry. In obedience, John Craig writes a confession, relative unto the former Confession (which was wholly positive) and abjuring all the corruptions of Rome, both in doctrine and superstitious rites and whole hierarchy; together with a promise to continue in the obedience of the doctrine and discipline of this church, and to defend the same to our vocation and power all the days of our lives, under the pains contained in the law, and danger both of body and soul: And seeing many are stirred up by Satan, and that Roman Antichrist, to promise, swear, subscribe, and for a time use the holy sacraments in the church deceitfully, against their own conscience, &c." as follows in the national covenant. From the above words of Petrie, we may clearly see what gave rise to the national covenant, viz. Under the covert of the above-mentioned dispensations

* Hist. p. 406.

dispensations from Rome, severals of the Popish party sheltered and thought themselves safe, both in signing our large Confession of Faith, and in joining deceitfully in the use of the holy sacraments; therefore the short Confession of Faith or national covenant was framed, wherein the abominations of Rome, and amongst others the above dispensations, are particularly and expressly abjured; and wherein likewise the sincere intention of the swearer is declared in the strongest terms. And as for the strong expressions that are made use of in the national covenant, 'tis plain that they were designed by the framers of it, as a rail to debar such as they say were stirred up by Satan and that Roman Antichrist, to promise, swear, &c. *and for a time to use the holy sacraments in the kirk deceitfully; minding thereby, under the external cloak of religion, to corrupt and subvert secretly God's true religion within the kirk, &c.* And if, after all, any should wickedly presume to break in over the rail, the sin should ly at their door, and this bold presumption should be an aggravation of their heinous guilt, or, as it is expressed in the covenant, *their double condemnation in the day of the Lord Jesus.*

The above observation, taken from Petrie's history, may help to take off the force of some other exceptions that are made by our author against the national covenant: As for instance, Essay, p. 110. he tells us, "That some, sundry, yea, many among the most judicious, are of opinion the national covenant ought to be rectified, not only by explications, but by some alterations: And, to name but in one particular, 'tis said, They cannot see how any else but real assured converts or believers can take the national covenant, none but such as have what is called sensible reflex assurance." 'Tis plain, that our author is amongst the *some* or *many* who start the above difficulty against the national covenant; otherwise, when he mentions the said difficulty, he should have been at pains to satisfy these most judicious persons who have moved it. The objection then that our author makes against the national covenant is, That none but assured converts or believers, and such who have sensible reflex assurance, can take the national covenant. Here I might ask our author, May not a true believer be assured and persuaded of the truths of the gospel, and yet at the same time be in the dark about his own interest in Christ or want what he calls sensible reflex assurance? As also, it might be enquired,

quired, If there can be any reflex assurance, but what is some degree or other sensible? But, not to insist upon this, I shall consider what is offered by our author, to prove that none but such as have what is called sensible reflex assurance can take the national covenant." This (says he) they could not do, "In regard the takers in swearing say, After long and due examination of our consciences in matters of true and false religion, we are now thorowly resolved in the truth by the word and Spirit of God." But there is nothing in these expressions which are contained in the preamble to our national covenant, that gives the least ground for the difficulty above-mentioned: The subject of the thorow resolution, mentioned in the above words of the covenant, is not one's particular personal interest in Christ, but matters of true and false religion; and, may not one be fully assured, or thorowly persuaded, with respect to the truth in matters of true and false religion, tho' they have not a sensible reflex assurance concerning their own personal interest in Christ? for it is this assurance I suppose is meant by such who move the difficulty. And I judge that these sundry many judicious persons, who have moved the above objections against the covenant, have not duly considered the above words of our national covenant on which the difficulty is grounded in regard the objection that they move upon this head, against our national covenant, amounts to this, That none can be thorowly resolved in their own consciences in matters of true and false religion, if they have not an assurance of their personal interest in Christ: And I suppose this will be looked upon as a dangerous as well as erroneous conclusion, in regard it would make true believers, while they want sensible reflex assurance, sceptics in matters of true and false religion. When it is added in the preamble to the covenant, "That they are thorowly resolved in the truth by the word and Spirit of God;" neither does this infer the necessity of what our author calls sensible reflex assurance; and that because such as are only temporary believers may be resolved in the truth of matters of true and false religion, by the word and the common operations of the Spirit of God. I doubt not but it may be said of those mentioned in the parable Matth. xiii. 20. *who heard the word, and anon with joy received it, and yet fell away*; that they were resolved in the truth with respect to matters of true and false religion: And therefore

Therefore even such who are neither converts, nor assured converts and believers, may express themselves in the above words of our national covenant. Yea, further, such as have only what is called a mere historical faith, may be resolved in their own consciences in the truth, with respect to matters of true and false religion, both by the word, and by the common strivings of the Spirit of God with their own consciences; and therefore might take the national covenant, and warrantably express themselves in the above manner. 'Tis here likewise to be observed, that, after the truth had been overclouded with Antichristian darkness, it did break forth with a beaming and radiant lustre in reforming times; there was a very plentiful effusion of the Spirit, when the Lord brought his church and people in this land out of Antichristian darkness; as also, there was in the year 1638 a more than ordinary effusion of the Spirit upon all ranks of persons in this land, as I have already observed. Under this plentiful effusion of the Spirit, many were savingly enlightned; others had a common enlightning work of the Spirit of God, in matters that concerned the difference betwixt true and false religion; and therefore might warrantably swear, not only in the above terms contained in the preamble, but might also say, "That they were persuaded in their consciences, thro' the knowledge and love of God's true religion, imprinted in their hearts by the holy Spirit." And tho' many at this time were savingly enlightned, yet there is no doubt that others were only under a common enlightning work of the Spirit, and therefore fell away; they proved unstedfast and perfidious in his covenant: And this was likewise the case with Israel in the wilderness, who swore with as great solemnity to the Lord as ever Scotland did, and yet with many of them *God was not well pleased*, 1 Cor. x. 5. I must further observe, with respect to the above strong expressions contained in the covenant, that they are agreeable to the scripture-rule for such solemn actions; such as, Jer. iv. 2. *And thou shalt swear, The Lord liveth, in truth, in judgment, and in righteousness; and the nations shall bless themselves in him, and in him shall they glory.* These words of the prophet do plainly point at the swearing or covenanting of nations unto the Lord; and the above expressions in our national covenant are expressly laid against these who sheltered themselves under dispensations

from Rome, and who dealt deceitfully and against their own consciences in the matters of God: Therefore our covenanting fathers declare, That they swear in truth, or in sincerity, being resolved in their own consciences in the truth, with respect to matters of true and false religion, by the word and Spirit of God: This is said, in opposition to the above hypocritical deceivers. Again, they declare they swear in righteousness and judgment, being persuaded in their own consciences, "thro' the knowlege and love of God's true religion" on imprinted in their hearts by the holy Spirit." This is said likewise in opposition to such as were guilty of hypocrisy and double-dealing with God and his kirk; as also, a blind implicate faith, or the general doubtfom faith of the church of Rome, is hereby condemned.

As for the other expressions of our national covenant, from which our author likewise argues, that a sensible reflex assurance is needful in such as would swear the national covenant, *viz.* "To this true reformed kirk we join ourselves willingly, in doctrine, faith, religion, discipline, and use of the holy sacraments, as lively members of the same church, under Christ our Head." The difficulty is chiefly founded upon the last words, *as lively members, &c.* And, for clearing this difficulty, I observe, That as the Lord Jesus is given to be Head over all things unto the church which is his body, so this glorious and exalted Head may be viewed under a double consideration, and so may his body the church. 1st, The church may be considered as it is his believing and mystical body: 2^{dly}, As it is a visible professing body. To the church considered as his believing mystical body, the Lord Jesus Christ is not only the Head of rule and government, but he is in a special manner the Head of all gracious, saving and spiritual influences, whereby they are quickned and sanctified, and preserved unto his heavenly kingdom; their union is from this holy One, who communicates his Spirit unto all the members of his mystical body, according to their different measures. Again, if the church is considered as a visible professing body, he is both a Head of rule and government, and also of the communication of all these spiritual gifts, not only such as are saving, but also of all these common gifts and graces, whereby all the members of the visible body are in their several spheres and stations, adapted and made serviceable unto the good of the whole body, 1 Cor. xii. 14.—2

Further

further, when the church is viewed as the believing mystical
 body of Christ, she is then considered as under the internal
 dispensation of the grace of the covenant. Again, when the
 church is viewed as a visible professing body, she is then con-
 sidered as under the external administration of the covenant
 of grace, making an outward credible profession of the truths
 of the gospel, and giving an outward subjection unto the or-
 dinances of Christ, particularly the government and discipline
 of his house. I observed in the first section of the first chap-
 ter, That tho' every particular church stands in relation unto
 the catholic body as a part unto the whole, yet every parti-
 cular church, whether national or presbyterial, may be con-
 sidered as a visible body, in respect of its own members, or-
 der and government. And it is very obvious and plain, that
 when our reforming fathers declare their conjunction with this
 true reformed kirk in doctrine, faith, religion, discipline, &c.
 no more can be meant but their conjunction with this reform-
 ed church as an outward visible organical body making an
 outward profession of the true faith, and professing subjection
 unto the ordinances of divine institution and appointment:
 And, when they declare themselves lively members of the
 professing visible body in Christ their Head, no more can be
 intended than the sincerity of their profession, in opposition
 unto the dead and corrupt members of Antichrist their head,
 who were only moved from worldly respects, as it is expres-
 sed in our Confession of Faith; and who under the external
 cloak of religion, by vertue of the Pope's dispensations, sub-
 verted secretly God's true religion, and, when their time did
 serve them, became open enemies and persecutors of the same,
 under the vain hope of the said dispensations, devised (as is
 likewise expressed in the national covenant) against the word
 of God, to the Pope's great confusion, and the double con-
 demnation of all such his followers, in the day of the Lord
 Jesus. Hence the reader may see, that when our covenant-
 ers swear, as lively members of this reformed church in Christ
 their Head, it is not that vital union betwixt Christ the Head
 and the mystical body,* that is here mainly intended; but it
 is that outward visible conjunction, as members of the same
 visible organic body, under Christ the Head of the church,
 that is here principally intended: And therefore, when they
 declare themselves lively members of the said body, no more
 can be meant but that their profession was not that dead, rot-

ten, hypocritical and deceitful profession, with a design to subvert the true religion, which severals of the Popish party made: Hence they add; "We therefore, willing to take away all suspicion of hypocrisy, and of such double-dealing with God and his kirk, call the Searcher of all hearts for witness, that our minds and hearts do fully agree with this our confession, promise, oath and subscription, &c." From what is above observed, I hope the reader may see, that there is no ground for that objection which our author tells us many among the most judicious make against the national covenant; as also, that the covenant may be sworn in its genuine sense and meaning, even by such who have not what our author calls sensible reflex assurance.

Our author makes another objection against the national covenant, p. 185. *viz.* "Might not some serious souls, having a full sensible assurance, being persuaded the believer is beyond all danger of hell, had a scruple to swear to do so and so, under the danger of both body and soul in the day of God's fearful judgment? which are the words of that covenant." He adds, "If I mistake not, most part of the seven brethren, sometime since 1722, would had a scruple to swear in the above terms." To which I answer, Our author is very much mistaken; for all the seceding brethren may safely swear the covenant in the above terms without any scruple. I hope our author will not alledge against any of them, that they have departed from the doctrine laid down in our Confession of Faith; and they cheerfully own the sixth article of the 19th chapter of our Confession of Faith (as well as the other articles of that Confession) *viz.* "Altho' true believers be not under the law as a covenant of works, to be thereby justified or condemned; yet it is of great use to them, as well as others,—and the threatnings of it serve to shew what even their sins deserve, &c." Does not every oath contain, either explicitly or implicitly, a solemn appeal to God, not only as the witness, but also as the judge and avenger in case of perfidy or false swearing? If our author is amongst the some who scruple at the national covenant on account of the above awful certification in its bosom, he is not far from the principles of the Quakers and German Anabaptists, who affirm, that it is not lawful to swear any oaths whatsoever.

I proceed

I proceed now to consider what is advanced by our author against the constituent members of the assembly 1638. He makes mention of a great many oaths that were imposed before 1638, tho' I have not observed that any of them were imposed either by civil or ecclesiastic authority, nay, not by the pretended assemblies of that period; I do not pretend to know what the lawless high commission did. And, after he has reckoned up his oaths, he tells us, Essay, p. 92. "I suppose the ministers of that assembly 1638, for a great part, were men who had sworn and come under these oaths." And, p. 89. he tells us, "That assembly consisted mainly of such as had subjected themselves to Prelacy, which, says he, was the settled government of the church from 1606 to that time; and many of them had taken the abominable oaths which were imposed in that period: And when they neither professed repentance for complying with Prelacy, nor professed repentance for taking such oaths, nor was any Confession required of them, &c." He subjoins, "And, for ought I know, there might be twenty in that assembly that had complied with Prelacy, for one such received by the church of Scotland at the revolution." The above charge against the members of that famous assembly is laid in a very invidious manner, and with an evident design to expose and defame them. I hope, from the narrative I have given in the preceeding part of this chapter, the reader will see that there is no truth in what our author advances, when he affirms, That such as had complied with Prelacy, and had taken the oaths he mentions, did not profess repentance for the same. The whole proceedings of the land at that time, as also of the assembly 1638, were one continued series and track of a public confession of the backslidings of this church and land from the Lord, and of a public profession of repentance for the same: Therefore, upon supposition that it was true that the most part of that assembly had subjected to Prelacy, it is very indecent in our author to throw up the same: The Lord hath said that he will not remember the sins of his people, who acknowledge their iniquities and return unto him, and that he will cast all their sins into the depths of the sea; 'tis then very much presumption in others to upbraid them with these, much more when it is done with a design to extenuate the sins of others. And it is obvious, that our author misrepresents the assembly 1638, that he may extenuate

the conduct of the assembly 1690, with respect to the Prelatic clergy, and other steps of defection.

But when our author affirms so confidently, that the assembly 1638 consisted mainly of such as had subjected themselves to Prelacy, and that the ministers of that assembly were for a great part men who had sworn the oaths he mentions, I want his vouchers to support this charge. Tho' he abounds in his authorities, yet he has not given us one authority to support the charge he has laid against such a reverend and faithful body of men. Does he think that we must sustain his invidious accusations as true, upon his sole authority? Therefore I demand of him a proof of the charge; and I may justly crave that the world may hold him as a slanderer, unless by good and sufficient vouchers he prove the accusation that he has laid against an assembly, concerning which I may say, without disparagement unto any others, that the church of Scotland has never seen a more faithful body of men representing her in the capacity of a national assembly. I do not refuse that some of the ministers who were members of the assembly 1638 had complied with Prelacy, and also taken the oaths required of intrants into the ministry: That great man, Mr. Henderson their moderator, was Prelatic in his judgment at first, as I have reported already; and likewise I have observed, that he gave abundant evidences of repentance for his compliance with the same. But that which I demand our author may prove is, that the assembly 1638 consisted mainly of such as had subjected themselves to Prelacy, as he affirms, p. 89. and that the ministers of that assembly, for a great part, were men who had sworn and come under the oaths which he mentions, p. 92. I am not obliged to prove a negative; yet I might give as strong evidences to the contrary, as a proof of this nature can admit: But I shall give one evidence at the time; and, if our author shall upon any sufficient grounds and reasons disprove it, I may afterwards give him others. The evidence I give, against our author's assertions is, The king's proclamation made at the cross of Edinburgh, December 18th, 1638, in the time of the sitting of the said assembly: In the said proclamation, their proceedings are condemned as illegal and unwarrantable, and all their acts and deeds are declared to be null and void, and the former prohibition given them by the king's commissioner

justified, amongst other reasons, for the following. That the "commissioners for the assembly, some of them were under the censure of this church, some of them under the censure of the church of Ireland, some long since banished for open and avowed teaching against monarchy, others of them suspended, and some admitted to the ministry contrary to the form prescribed by the laws of this kingdom, others of them rebels and at the horn, some of them confined, and all of them by oath and subscription bound to overthrow the Episcopal government." By the censures of this church, and the censures of the church of Ireland in the proclamation, are meant the sentences of deprivation, suspension and the like, which were passed by the high commission courts, on account of the nonconformity of several worthy ministers to Prelacy: By these who were admitted to the ministry contrary to the laws of the kingdom, are meant such ministers who were ordained by presbyteries, and who had not complied with the oaths required of intrants at that time. Look now, reader, and see what truth there is in the charge that is laid against the constituent members of this assembly by the author of the Essay; they are indeed treated after a very hard manner: The king by his proclamation condemns them all. as such who had been one way or other witnessing against Prelacy, and a course of conformity to the same; and now, in this age, a professed son of the church of Scotland accuses the bulk and body of them as compliers with Prelacy, and as a set of men who had sworn all the abominable oaths he mentions.

I shall proceed now to consider the treatment our author gives to the acts and proceedings of this assembly; and particularly, to an article passed amongst several others into an act, on the 17th and 18th of December; it is the 17th article in order: I know not how often it is thrown up by our author, and always in a very invidious manner, as p. 20, 93, 94, 146, 168, 175, 181, &c. This act is one of his common topics, it runs through his whole Essay, unto it he makes his retreat when he is brought to any pinch: He represents it as a hard act, as such an unreasonable act, that it has not a parallel from that time to this: as an act of the greatest tyranny, as an unaccountable act, as an act restricting ministerial freedom, &c. I shall now transcribe this act, against which our author brings so many and such grievous charges; and, in

In regard he always mentions scarce the one half of it, I have transcribed in Italic that part upon which he thinks fit to lay his thumb, that the reader may see that part which is left out of the Essay. “ *Whereas the Confession of the Faith* “ *this kirk, concerning both doctrine and discipline, so often* “ *called in question by the corrupt judgment and tyrannical* “ *authority of the pretended Prelates, is now clearly explained* “ *ed, and by this whole kirk represented by this general assembly* “ *bly concluded, ordained also to be subscribed by all sorts of persons* “ *sons within the said kirk and kingdom: The assembly constitut* “ *utes and ordains, that from henceforth no sort of person* “ *of whatsoever quality and degree, be permitted to speak or* “ *write against the said Confession, this assembly or any act* “ *of this assembly, and that under the pain of incurring the* “ *cenfures of this kirk.* ”

Is it without design that our author leaves out the first and the greatest part of the above act? Is it fair dealing to treat such a body of men after this manner, by giving scarce the one half of their meaning? Does not the *ratio legis*, or the reason of law, tend much to explain the same? And the part of the above act which is omitted by our author, contains plainly the reasons and grounds of their act, *viz.* That the Confession of Faith, or the national covenant of this kirk concerning both doctrine and discipline, which had been called in question by the Prelates, was now clearly explained, as also, that this was done by this whole kirk, represented in that general assembly; and likewise, because the said assembly had ordained the national covenant to be subscribed by all sorts of persons within this kirk and kingdom: These are the grounds upon which they enact and ordain as follows in the act. And the above part of the act, which our author always cites, contains three things; The one is, That henceforth no person, of whatever quality or degree, should speak or write against the Confession of Faith or national covenant, *viz.* as it was clearly explained by this assembly, as is evident from the above preamble to their act. The second particular enacted is, That none should speak or write against this assembly, *viz.* against the constitution of this assembly, as a free and lawful representative of the whole church of Scotland. And a third particular enacted is, That none speak or write against any act of this assembly; and all these

are prohibit under the pain of the censures of this
 ark.

From the historical account that I have given, it is evident, that the particulars above-mentioned were opposed by the relates and their adherents; they had protested against the constitution of this assembly, and declined their authority; they condemned the explication that was given of the national covenant or Confession of Faith; yea, by public proclamations made both at Glasgow and Edinburgh, their meetings were condemned as unlawful, after they were discharged by the king's commissioner; likewise, all their acts and proceedings were declared to be null and void, and the subjects were discharged to yield any obedience unto them: Therefore it was necessary for the assembly to assert their own constitution, and to justify their own acts and proceedings, as also to declare all such censurable who should impugn their constitution, or refuse obedience unto their acts and proceedings. As this is all that is done in the act about which our author makes so much noise, so the assembly could do no less; for, if they had done otherwise, they had not asserted the just rights and privileges of Christ's spiritual kingdom, which was the question now upon the field; they had departed from the testimony that they gave, when the bishops protested against their constitution, and when the king's commissioner discharged their meeting; and the world might justly have looked upon them as men who had given up with that cause, which they had espoused with the greatest solemnity: yea, if they had done so, they had well deserved all the unfair characters that the author of the Essay gives them.

But since the author of the Essay, to support his charge against this famous assembly, musters up a great many of their particular acts and proceedings, which he likewise brings as so many accusations against them; I shall briefly consider them. The accusations that are brought by our author are for the most part laid by way of query, and they are introduced after his usual ambiguous manner of dealing, Essay p. 93. "Now (says he) some might think this (*viz.* the above act) was an act of the greatest tyranny, and a plain restricting of ministerial freedom &c." And afterwards he says, "Some tender serious ministers might think themselves obliged in conscience to speak, preach, and testify even against this very act itself, as restricting ministerial Freedom:

" And

“ And they might speak against that act which condemns
 “ these assemblies at Aberdeen and St. Andrews, partly upon
 “ such a ground as that the burghs could not be present at
 “ these assemblies.” To which I answer, It would have been
 no great evidence, either of tenderness or seriousness, if they
 had spoke against the assembly 1638 on this account; and
 that because the foresaid assemblies were condemned upon oth-
 er good and weighty grounds; as also, because the indistincti-
 on of these pretended assemblies was so short before the time
 of holding of them, that burghs could not send up their com-
 missioners, as the act of the assembly at Glasgow condemning
 the said pretended assemblies bears. And tho’ I shall not en-
 ter into the question, Whether this part of our constitution
 is right or wrong? yet it is certain that burghs have had their
 commissioners to our assemblies from the reformation to this
 very day; and therefore they may reckon that they have a
 right to send their commissioners, ay and until some general
 assembly enquire into their right, and discharge this practice.
 And besides, ’tis plain, that it was with design that so short
 advertisement was given of the meeting of these pretended as-
 semblies, that the burghs might not be present; it seems they
 were not very pliable at that time to the court measures for
 supporting Prelacy: And therefore the assembly at Glasgow
 had good ground to subjoin the above to the other weighty
 reasons they give for the nullity of these pretended assem-
 blies.

Our author adds, “ What if they (*viz.* serious and tender
 “ ministers) should thought it duty to testify against that act
 “ December 5th, session 15. which condemned the unlaw-
 “ ful oaths of intrants in time of Prelacy, because without a-
 “ ny pretext or warrant from the kirk, &c. without even
 “ mentioning their being contrary to the word of God; so
 “ also because, when they condemned the service book, the
 “ book of canons and high commission, they condemn them
 “ upon such like grounds, but never mention their being
 “ contrary to the word of God?” I answer, That this accu-
 ser of the assembly 1638 always misrepresents or conceals their
 faithful proceedings. As for the service-book, they condemn
 it in their act, session 14. on account of its Popish frame and
 forms in divine worship, and because it contained many Popish
 errors and ceremonies, and also was repugnant to the doctrine,
 discipline and order of this reformed kirk, &c. as the reader
 may

may see from the printed act. As for the book of canons, the assembly finds, "That it establisheth a tyrannical power in the persons of the pretended bishops, over the worship of God, mens consciences, &c. and that it overthroweth the whole discipline and government of synodal assemblies, &c. Therefore they reject and condemn the said book, as contrary to the Confession of our Faith, and repugnant to the established government, the book of discipline, &c." As for the court of high commission, the assembly find that it subverteth the jurisdiction, and ordinary judicatories and assemblies of the kirk, sessions, presbyteries, provincial and national assemblies;—and they condemn the said court as unlawful in itself, and prejudicial to the liberties of Christ's kirk and kingdom." As for the oaths of intrants, the assembly condemn them as unlawful, not only because they were without any pretext or warrant from the kirk, but also because they were "contrary to the ancient and laudable constitutions of this kirk, which never have been nor can be lawfully repealed, but must stand in force." Let the reader now judge if there is any truth in that which is reported by our author, That the book of canons, &c. are condemned, because without any pretext or warrant from the kirk, and upon such like grounds; nay, from what I have transcribed from the acts of that assembly, the reader may easily see, that they were condemned upon better and surer grounds. If our author shall say, There is no mention of their being contrary to the word of God; Are they not declared to be contrary to the doctrine, discipline and order of this reformed kirk, to our Confession of Faith, or the ancient and laudable constitutions of this kirk? And, was not our doctrine, government and discipline, together with our Confession of Faith, all received by this, as well as former free and lawful assemblies, because they were founded and bottomed upon the word of God? Therefore I conclude, that, if any minister should alledge it to be his duty to testify in the manner mentioned by our author, he would be so far from shewing that he is either serious or tender, that he would give sufficient evidences of his being unworthy of being a minister of the church of Scotland.

His next query is, "What if they should thought it duty to testify against them for that expression in their sentence against archbishop Spotiswood and others, where they say,
Declining

"Declining and protesting against the assembly is by the
 "of this assembly censurable with summary excommuni-
 "on?" To which I answer, That, instead of acts of the
 assembly, our author should have writ act of assembly; for
 it is in the act he refers to, And that which is said by
 assembly 1638 is, That, according to the acts of assembly
 this church, such as protest, and decline the authority of
 free, lawful, and right-constitute general assembly, are cen-
 surable with the summary excommunication: And, when they
 said so, they say nothing but what the bible says, Mat. 23.
 17. *But, if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto
 as an heathen man and a Publican.*

Our author goes on with his queries; "What (says he)
 "they should thought it duty to speak against that assembly
 "for showing so much lenity to the bishops of Dunkeld
 "Caithness, as only to suspend them from the ministry
 "when it may be thought they deserved deposition on account
 "of what was found evident against them?" To which it
 answered, That the general assembly, in their sentences
 against the said pretended bishops, give their reasons why they
 proceeded no further against them than they did; and our
 author, if he had done justice to that assembly, should like-
 wise have told them. Both the said bishops sent letters to the
 assembly, giving their reasons why they could not be present;
 one of them mentions his sickness at the time, the other in
 his letter submitted himself to the assembly. As none of the
 pretended bishops were contumacious, so none, who read the
 sentences past against them, will find grounds for alleging
 that any undue lenity was exercised towards them; since the
 excuses that were contained in their letters were found rel-
 evant, it was but just and reasonable to hear them upon the
 libels: And in the mean time the assembly suspended them
 from all ministerial function, and they appoint them both to
 be excommunicate, in case they gave not satisfying evidence
 of their repentance to such commissioners as the assembly had
 empowered to try and judge them.

Our author's next query is, "What if some should say
 "The sentence of that assembly against the minister of Tro-
 "nent seemed somewhat sharp, in that he was suspended from
 "baptising a child in a private house?" To which I answer
 That our author discovers a more than ordinary keenness
 against the assembly 1638, when he charges them with a de-

that was done and past near fifty years before the said assembly had a being: From what spring and principle all this keenness flows, I shall leave it unto his own conscience to determine; in the mean time he gives many evidences that he has writ very much at random, tho' he tells us in his preface that a draught of his Essay was prepared a year before it was published. If our author had read the acts of assembly 1638, against which he expresses himself in such an invidious manner, he might have seen that in their act, session 18. when they were upon the head of private baptism, they give some instances that this church condemned the same, and, amongst others, that, in the assembly holden at Edinburgh 1581, the minister of Tranent was suspended for baptizing an infant in a private house. Our author in his *Short Vindication* acknowledges his mistake; I wish he were likewise sensible of his mistakes in many other particular instances, which have led him to report what is neither truth nor matter of fact.

As for his next query, "What if they should thought that sentence somewhat severe, which enjoined such ministers to be excommunicate, as, being deposed by that assembly, did not acquiesce in their sentence, or if they should exercise any part of their ministerial function? which was enacted sess. 14." To which I briefly answer, That all who were deposed by this assembly were deposed on just and relevant grounds, by a lawful and right-constitute court of Christ; and therefore, if they disobeyed the sentence of such an assembly, they deserved to be excommunicate on account of their contumacy, according to the scripture above-cited.

His next query is, "What if some should thought it a fault to thank his majesty for indicting or calling that assembly, terming it a royal favour, when they had all right by their intrinsic power to meet of themselves?" To which I answer, according to our author, p. 87. *Is it not desirable when church and state agree?* especially in a matter of such public concern: And therefore, when the supreme magistrate, without prejudging the power of the church, indicts or calls a general assembly, especially in a broken state of the church, as was the case at present, they have good reason to thank him for it; and it is always more eligible to have general assemblies with the magistrate's countenance, than to convene in opposition unto him. The above words of our author, concerning

cerning the church's having *all right by their intrinsic power to meet of themselves*; whether they are laid by him in a way of jest, or in sober earnest, I shall not determine: But, from the above historical account that I have given, 'tis evident that our reformers at that time were fully resolved to call a general assembly, in case the king should have refused to grant their petitions for the same. And Rapine, tho' a stranger, does more justice unto them than our author, tho' a Scotchman, and bearing the character of a Presbyterian minister when he tells us in his history *, That after the marquis of Hamiltoun returned to court, August 1638, "the tables (as Rapine calls them) expecting only new snares, or fresh delays from the court, resolved that a general assembly should be held, either with the king's permission if he would grant it, or without his consent; and that the election of commissioners should be the 22d of September."

As for our author's last query, concerning expressions in the assembly's supplications with respect to king James VI. which he alledges some might be apprehensive looked too like flattery; it deserves no manner of notice. None that were either serious or tender could justly charge this assembly with flattery, who had so fully asserted the rights of the King of Zion, and of his spiritual kingdom, notwithstanding of the strongest opposition from the king and the court. The titles of civil honour and regard that are given to sovereign princes are warranted from the practice of the church and people of God recorded in scripture; it was no flattery in the three children, when they addressed king Nebuchadnezzar, a grand adversary of the church and people of God, Dan. iii. 9. after the very same manner in which the Chaldean magicians addressed him, Dan. ii. 4.

I have now done with the accusations that the author of the Essay has brought against that faithful assembly at Glasgow, in several *what if's*. I hope the reader will see that they come to nothing, and that, after he has filled up his roll of invidious accusations, he must be very sore put to it to prove them tyrannical in their administration; for he has not the confidence to say in any of the above instances that he thinks so and so, but still, *What if some should think or speak so and so?* And yet, after all, he draws the following conclusion, "Will not an act of that
" nature

nature (viz. the 17th article above-mentioned) be owned by all to be a most tyrannical act?" Are they *tyrannical*, and *most tyrannical*, in the act our author mentions, when, in all the instances he has given to support the above charge, he has not produced one act of that assembly, but that may very well be justified, yea, which he himself has put the confidence directly or expressly to condemn, tho' he gives sufficient evidence that he wants not abundance of good-will unto it? And I am sorry that I must say it of one of our author's profession and denomination, That he has given too much ground to hold and esteem him an unjust accuser and slanderer of a faithful reforming assembly of the church of Scotland.

I shall only further add, That our author, in his invectives against the act he mentions so often, tells us, p. 21. That it looks very like a restricting of ministerial freedom; this he frequently harps upon: As also, that it is more a term of ministerial communion than the act of assembly 1733; and he reckons it a very sinful term of communion, p. 181, 182. To which I answer, That as all the proceedings of that assembly were for the support and advancement of our reformation, so there is no freedom restricted but such as may be justly reckoned a freedom of writing and speaking against our Confession of Faith and our reformation-principles: And our author has given too many evidences of his favouring a sinfulitudinarian freedom, in his lax principles concerning church-communion that run thro' his Essay. With respect to our author's arguing, That it is a very sinful term of ministerial communion, or at least, that, according to the brethren's reasonings upon the act 1733, it may be reckoned a term of ministerial communion, tho' in our author's account a very sinful one. I answer, That when I consider the faithful acts and proceedings of the assembly 1638, as I look upon the act that he quarrels to be still a binding act, so I judge that our author, or any others who treat the proceedings of that assembly in the manner that he has done, deserve the censures of the church; and, if the discipline of the Lord's house were rightly exercised, the spiritual sword would be drawn against them: But it is to be regretted that matters are otherwise stated amongst us, and that such as testify against a course of defection, will sooner fall under the censures of the present judicatories, than those who extenuate or palliate the same.

S E C T. III.

Wherein the Exceptions that are laid by the Author of the Essay against the Acts and Proceedings of several Assemblies of our reforming Period after the Year 1738, are considered.

THE author of the Essay gathers together a great heap of matter from the beginning of the fourth section of his sixth chapter p. 79. to his 7th chapter p. 214. that is, for about 132 pages, it is laid in such a confused manner, and is never distinguished under proper heads or sections, that it is very difficult to trace him: the same things are repeated frequently over and over again. I shall not concern myself with his arguings against the author of the book called *Plain Reasons*, but shall only meddle with such things as have a direct relation unto the Testimony of the seceding brethren. I have had occasion, upon the former heads, to examine a great many of the particulars advanced by our author, in his long section, against the said brethren: But in regard that our author musters up many acts and proceedings of our reforming assemblies, which he reckons faults and failings, or bad acts in what he calls that *extolled period*, yea, likewise, according to his ordinary way, with an *If*, with a *Perhaps*, endeavouring to impress his readers that the proceedings for twelve years time from 1638 to 1650 were more tyrannical than any proceedings of the judicatories of this church since the revolution; and therefore he condemns the seceding ministers, because they do not in their Testimony condemn the faults and failings of this church before the year 1650, as well as her defections after that time: This obliges me to consider the bad acts that he has charged upon the assemblies of the above-mentioned period. And, in regard I have swelled this book too much already, I shall only take notice of such of them as our author seems to lay most weight and stress upon.

Our author, p. 88. takes notice of a complaint, which he calls a great clamour made against the church of Scotland as being Erastian; "Because sometimes, as in 1692, when the day was altered for the assembly's meeting, the assembly submitted, and yet gave no testimony against this inroad."

"ment."

ment." The case stands thus, The general assembly in the year 1692 was dissolved by the king's commissioner: The moderator protested against the dissolution of that assembly; and they immediately rose, after another day was named by the moderator for the meeting of the next assembly: But, by the king's proclamation from the cross of Edinburgh, their meeting was adjourned from time to time till March 1694. And if our author will believe Mr. Hogg in his life, as well as many others, they report, that a considerable body of the ministry made an apology to the king for the moderator's taking upon him to name the day for the meeting of another assembly, after his majesty by his commissioner had dissolved them; as also, that the diet named by the moderator was deserted, which last cannot be refused: Therefore many did justly complain, that the church of Scotland had submitted unto an Erastian inroad, and that she had thereby departed from a material branch and part of her testimony; especially when the assembly 1690 had never asserted the just rights and privileges of the courts of the King of Zion. And, when the assembly did meet 1694, they gave no manner of testimony against the above dissolution; neither did they assert the just rights and privileges of the kingdom of Christ, tho' the above inroad upon the same was reckoned by many a particular and special call to this necessary duty. Our author tells us, he frankly owns, That "it was the fault of the civil government, and a fault in his majesty king William, that he by his proclamation did alter the time appointed for the meeting of our general assembly; and that it was the king's fault that by his commissioner in 1692 he raised that assembly: And also, he thinks it was the sin of the church of Scotland, that she did not adhere to the protest taken by Mr. Crichton her moderator at that assembly, &c." But, to extenuate what he humbly thinks to be a sin, he tells us, "That the church of Scotland was thus guilty in what they reckon her best times: For, says he, tho' the assembly 1638 appointed their next meeting to be upon the third Wednesday of July 1639, and appointed such as should not acquiesce to their acts to be cited to that time; yet the king altered the day, and they did not meet till the 17th of August that year; and we read of no testimony that was given by the church of Scotland against what was done in that affair." All this is told by our au-

thor, not only with a design to extenuate the sin of the church of Scotland; but likewise with a design to fix a charge on our reforming period, of departing from the testimony they had given for the rights of Christ's spiritual kingdom. But, if our author had dealt in a fair and candid manner with the assembly 1639. he ought likewise to have told his reader how it came to pass that the day appointed by the assembly 1638 was not kept: And therefore I think it not amiss to give the reader as short an account of it as I can, The *Apologetical Relation* gives a short hint at it*; but the Latin historian† gives the fullest historical account of the transaction of the year 1639 that I have seen, and the reader may take from him the following short relation of this matter.

The several commissioners of the general assembly 1639 having faithfully discharged their duty, in purging the house of God of many corrupt ministers, in consequence of the powers and instructions that were given unto them by the said assembly; such as they had duly censured, together with the deposed and excommunicate bishops, being filled with rage, did run to the court, and stirred up the king to make war against Scotland: And accordingly war is concluded both by sea and land against this kingdom; and preparations are made for coming down in a hostile manner, in order, as was given out, to reduce the rebels in Scotland to the king's obedience. In the mean time a declaration is published by the estates of this nation for their own necessary vindication wherein they justify their by-gone proceeding, and prove that the security of their civil liberties and religion was their only intention and design, and conscience their only motive in all that they had done. But this declaration was suppressed by the court in England, that the true state of affairs in Scotland might not be known there; and by the king's orders there is a contrary declaration emitted, styling the covenanters *seditionous rebels*. This was read in all the churches in England, to inflame that nation against them.

When the estates of Scotland saw that they could expect nothing but war, they resolved to prepare for their just and necessary defence: They levy an army of 24000 men, who marched to the borders under the command of general Leslie; the principal nobility and barons of the kingdom were in the army, with many of the ministry: They resolved to keep themselves

* *Apol. Relat.* p. 53.

† *Hist. Mot.* p. 295, &c.

themselves upon the defensive, and not to remove out of the
 Scots side, and in the whole of their behaviour to testify to
 the English, that they had no design either of rebellion against
 the king, or of war against the English nation, tho' they had
 been loaded with such unjust calumnies and aspersions. This
 was indeed a rare and singular army, as the Latin historian
 reports: When they had encamped at Duncelaw on the bor-
 der, there was "a wonderful unanimity both amongst lead-
 ers and soldiers, with a cheerful resolution for the support
 and defence of their common cause; they were frequent in
 the exercise of public and private religion; there was no-
 thing of that wickedness or intemperance to be seen a-
 mongst them, which is frequent in military camps: Their
 hours were divided thro'out the whole army into prayers,
 preachings, the necessary refreshment of their bodies, and
 the exercise of their arms." Mr. Livingstone in his life,
 reports, That, when he went up with the army to England
 1640, "It was very refreshful to remark, that, after they
 came to a quarter at night, there was nothing to be heard
 almost thro' the whole army, but singing of psalms, prayer,
 and reading of the scripture, by the soldiers in their seve-
 ral tents. *He adds,* And, as I was informed, there was
 largely more the year before, when the army lay at Duncel-
 law." When the English army beheld the disposition and
 behaviour of the Scots army, they were satisfied that they
 had been imposed upon; and therefore some of the English
 nobility proposed unto the Scots, that they should petition
 the king for a treaty, which they did accordingly: Upon
 which a treaty ensued; and, amongst other things in the
 treaty, it was agreed, that a free national assembly should be
 held at Edinburgh upon the 6th of August; and that the
 parliament should meet at the same place upon the 20th of
 August, in order to give the civil sanction to the acts and
 proceedings of the assembly. Our author is then in a mistake
 when he affirms, That the king altered the day to the 17th
 of August. If he had observed the printed acts of assembly
 1639, he might have seen that the first printed act, bearing
 date August 17, was passed in the 8th session of that assembly.
 Besides, from the short historical account I have given, the
 reader may see the vast-disparity that there is betwixt what
 passed in the year 1692 and the 1639: As for instance, the as-
 sembly 1692, when it was met, was dissolved by the king's
 authority,

authority, and they did immediately rise in obedience unto; but the assembly 1639 was neither convened nor solved. Again, the king by his sole authority altered the that was named by the moderator of the assembly 1692, adjourned the meeting of the next assembly from time to till the year 1694; but the diet appointed for the assembly 1639 was altered by a treaty concluded betwixt the king and the flower of the nation, with the consent of a considerable body of the ministry, who were there present by the appointment of their presbyteries. Likewise, the diet of the assembly in the year 1692 was adjourned by the king's proclamation for about the space of two years; but, by the treaty of Dunce-law, the meeting of the assembly was only adjourned for about 20 days at most: And when it is considered that the camp at Dunce-law did break up only on the 20th of June, where such a considerable part of the nation were present, cannot be well presumed that in the present situation of the affairs they could be in readiness to meet together in a national assembly at the time appointed in the month of July. From all which it may be very evident, how unjust our author is, in charging the assembly 1639 with neglecting a testimony against the 20 days adjournment of the meeting of the assembly, and how little it supports his charge against the assembly 1639, viz. That they were guilty of what is justly complained of with respect to the management of this church in the year 1692.

I shall now consider the exceptions that our author lays against our reforming period, on account of their imposition of the covenants under severe penalties, as he alleges. But before he enters upon this head, he makes a profession of owning, p. 109. "That it was a praise and glory to our land, to be a people solemnly devoted to the Lord, sworn to be for him, and to live to his praise. *He likewise owns* "this land hath been hainously guilty many ways, both in former and later times, in breaking our national engagements: This, says he, is just ground of lamentation." But then our author is very sparing in his condescending upon particular instances. He indeed tells us, Some have violated our covenants by turning to Popery, and others by disloyalty to our rightful sovereigns; these are his particulars: But then, when he tells us, that some have violated them by

going to other dreadful errors, and by sinful complying with and declaring for Prelacy, and some by schism and sinful division; his reader is left to make his conjectures what these dreadful errors or sinful divisions are, and what these compliances or declarations for Prelacy were, or who were the compliers with, or declarers for, Prelacy. Our author likewise, p. 112. would have his readers believe that he is not speaking against the covenants themselves, but against the manner of imposing them. As to the manner of imposing them, he tells us, p. 111. "That, if the covenants were to be renewed, it would be a sin to injoin them under any such severe penalties as church and state enforced them with from 1638 to 1649. And, says he, if we are to give a full, free, faithful testimony against the sins of our fore-fathers, as well as against the sins of our own day, instancing their iniquities as causes of fasting, then I think we ought to acknowledge the sin of church and state in that period, in imposing these solemn covenants under such severe penalties, which were a strong temptation to the dreadful sin of perjury.

With respect to the proceedings of the state, I shall not take upon me to justify every strong expression that is used by them in their acts injoining the covenant; but neither dare I condemn them, in regard I do not very well know the particular situation of the nation in our covenanting period: Only, it seems to be very plain, that the covenants were refused by none but the Popish and Prelatical party, who were all at that time zealous asserters of the sovereign's arbitrary power and authority. Likewise, our author cannot give me an instance of any that suffered either confiscation of goods, banishment or death, on account of their refusing the covenants; tho' some suffered capital punishment on account of their insurrection and rebellion against the civil government of the nation, in defence of arbitrary power, and against the just rights and liberties of the subject.

With respect to the conduct of the judicatories of the church in that period, they give frequent evidences of their caution and circumspection about admitting persons to swear or sign the covenant. As for instance, The general assembly 1649, in their Act Sess. 19. *concerning the receiving of engagers in the late unlawful war against England, to public satisfaction*, observe, That many have heretofore made a shew and profession of their repentance, who were not convinced

of their guiltiness, nor humbled for the same, &c. Therefore, for the better determining the truth of the sincerity of the repentance of those who desire to be admitted to the covenant and communion, they appoint and ordain, "That none of these persons who are debarred from the covenant and communion shall be admitted and received thereunto, but such as, after exact trial, shall be found, for some competent time before or after the offer of their repentance, to have in their ordinary conversation given real testimony of their dislike of the late unlawful engagement, and of their courses and ways of malignants, and of their sorrow for their accession to the same; and to live soberly, righteously, and godly, &c." And, after they enumerate several persons who have made defection and backsliding from the covenant, they ordain, "That these, notwithstanding their profession of repentance, be not suddenly received; but a competent time, according to the discretion of the judicatory, be assigned to them for the trial of the evidence of their repentance, according to the qualifications above-mentioned. Several other evidences might be given, that the judicatories at that time were very cautious and tender in admitting into the covenant such as they had ground to suspect were dealing deceitfully in the matters of God; and I defy our author or any others to prove that the least severities were exercised upon any such who scrupled at the covenants upon any real tenderness of conscience, yea, I doubt if there were any such in Scotland at that time.

With respect to the proceedings of the church, our author thinks fit to charge the judicatories, particularly the assembly of 1639. as being accessory to what he calls great and severe penalties; in regard they supplicate the council and parliament to injoin the national covenant to be taken by all his majesty's subjects of what rank and quality soever, under all civil pains. Which petition and supplication was granted by the parliament, and they ordained and enacted accordingly. Our author, p. 3. alleges, That under all civil pains might be included confiscation of goods, imprisonment, banishment, forfeiting of life and fortune. To which I answer, Though I do not pretend to have skill in the law, yet I have heard it affirmed by such as are well acquainted with our Scots laws, That unless the law expressly declares death to be the punishment, or mentions the pains of treason, any other penalty,

the highest annexed to any parliamentary statute, cannot be constructed in law to amount to death; and that, when the punishment is *all civil pains*, the judge is at liberty to proportion the punishment to the nature of the crime, and the quality of the offender: And therefore, when the covenant was enjoined under all civil pains, it appears to me that no more was intended than that the refusers of the covenant should not be admitted unto places of public trust; and this the humble judge may be very well vindicated. And besides, when I have looked into the act of parliament 1640, ratifying the covenant, &c. after the clause of *all civil pains*, it is enjoined, "And also (*viz.* the parliament) ordains the same men (*viz.* the covenant) to be presented at the entry of every parliament, and, before they proceed to any other act, that the same be publicly read and sworn by the whole members of parliament claiming voice therein; otherwise the refusers to subscribe and swear the same shall have no place nor voice in parliament." Here the reader may observe, that no higher penalty is decerned against such refusers, than excluding them from voice in parliament. In like manner, they ordain *all judges, magistrates, or other officers of whatsoever place, rank or quality, and ministers at their entry, to swear and subscribe the same covenant*. Here the parliament do clearly explain themselves with respect unto the penalty so much quarrelled by our author: But if our author shall make it evident unto me, that the civil punishment for a simple refusing of the covenant was carried any higher than as I have mentioned, I shall yield unto him that the parliament 1640 were wrong, neither shall I justify the supplication of the assembly 1639.

Our author appears to me very dubious and dark in his reasonings concerning civil penalties annexed unto church-decisions or religious oaths, as also concerning church-censures inflicted upon the refusal of religious oaths. I have not room to pursue our author at this time in his several reasonings upon these heads; and therefore I shall only propose a few questions to him, an answer to which is very needful for clearing the questions upon the field: And I shall not tell him what some others say upon them, but give mine own judgment plainly upon them; and I hope our author will deal in the same freedom and plainness with me.

1st, Whether or not a law, whether civil or ecclesiastical, requiring

requiring a positive duty, with a civil punishment or ecclesiastical censure annexed, infers force upon the consciences of men? The reason why I put this question to our author because, p. 111. he tells us, That the imposing these solemn covenants, under the severe penalties he mentions, was a strong temptation to the dreadful sin of perjury. Also, p. 113. he tells us, That we have sundry instances in scripture where force was used in taking solemn covenants; as 2 Chron. xv. 12, 13. 2 Chron. xxxiv. 31, 32. Ezra x. 3, 8. Neh. xiii. 25. It is an article of our Confession of Faith, Ch. 22. Art. 2. "That a lawful oath being imposed by lawful Authority, in matters of weight and moment, ought to be taken." I hope our author will not refuse, that swearing unto the Lord in religious matters is a positive duty enjoined under the New Testament, as well as under the old; and that it is duty to swear a religious oath, when required by lawful civil or ecclesiastical authority: But, if there is not a penalty annexed unto the law, it cannot be said to be imposed by authority; a law without a sanction, is only a mere recommendation, which may be obeyed or disobeyed as the subject pleases. All the divine laws have the most awful certification annexed unto them; yet I hope it will not be therefore said that men are forced to obedience. Hence, when our author from the scripture instances he gives, tells us that force was used in taking these solemn covenants, he reflects upon the laws and authority of the great Lawgiver. As also, when he says, The imposing of our solemn covenants under the penalties he mentions, was a strong temptation to the dreadful sin of perjury; it is an injurious and unsound reflection in regard the corruption and wickedness of men's hearts may strongly tempt them to this dreadful sin: But a righteous law, whatever the penalty is, when it requires a duty expressly commanded by the great and supreme Lawgiver, cannot in a safe sense be said to be a strong temptation to the above dreadful sin. Our author indeed adds, p. 111. "I am far from thinking the imposing of a lawful oath under a severe penalty, will make it sinful to take that oath; but it may be, yea, in my opinion, it certainly is, a sin in itself to impose to injoin such a solemn religious oath under a severe penalty; especially if in that oath we are obliged to swear, that, in taking it, we are not moved with a worldly respect, which are the very words of the nation's covenant."

covenant." As for the injoining a solemn religious oath under a severe penalty, which, our author tells us, is certainly a sin in the imposers; I must observe, that every oath is an act of solemn religious worship. By a religious oath, I suppose, our author means, an oath, the subject-matter whereof is religious things only: But he should have considered, that our national covenant contains also a civil allegiance to the king; and no doubt this is likewise a religious duty, to which we are bound by the fifth commandment. When our author reckons that this was a sin to impose the covenant under a severe penalty, I have already observed that the penalty annexed by the parliament may be very well vindicated. I wish our author would give us his judgment, whether or no an act injoining such a solemn religious oath as the national covenant, may have any civil penalty annexed unto it? If our author shall affirm, that the civil sanction ought not to be given unto any religious oaths injoined by the church; he may for the very same reasons affirm, that the civil sanction ought not to be given unto any Confession of Faith received and adopted by a church; or, that it ought not to be given unto any ecclesiastical statute or ordinance. I wish our author may tell us, Whether or not the scriptures he mentions do warrant any such penalty? Our Presbyterian divines have hitherto pled them for penalties of this kind: He may see amongst others Mr. Gillespie in his *Misellanies*, p. 204. Our author upon the foresaid scriptures observes, p. 113. That "these oaths or covenants were wholly and altogether divine, not only as to their matter, but also as to the form, words, and every expression: So that people could not be under the least hesitation, doubt or scruple as to the lawfulness of all contained in them." I want that our author may explain himself, when he speaks of the form, words, and every expression of a covenant, as necessary in order to make a covenant wholly and altogether divine. If our author means, that the express words as they were writ by the inspired penman are necessary, then we cannot have a covenant wholly and altogether divine, unless it is among such as do very well understand the Hebrew and Greek languages: But as the holy scriptures, when they are translated into many and different languages, may very well be called the word of God, in so far as the several translations give us the just and true meaning of the original text; so
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whatever is deduced by good and necessary consequence from the holy scripture, may and ought to be received with a divine faith, and without the least hesitation, as well as that which is contained in express scripture words. If our author does not grant this, he pleads the cause of such as refuse the warrantableness of Confessions of Faith; and the reader may see that his argument, as he has laid it against our national covenant, points plainly this way.

2dly, I ask our author, May not the church, not only advise the magistrate, but also directly apply to him for the sanction to such acts and constitutions of her judicatories are founded upon the word of God? And, is it not the duty of the civil magistrate in this case, as he is guardian of the tables of the law, to give the civil sanction to such ecclesiastical acts and constitutions? This is all that was done by the general assembly 1639 in their above mentioned act. And if our author is in any doubt about this, he may consult our Presbyterian divines, such as Rutherford and Mr. Gillespie upon this head.

3dly, I ask our author, Whether or not a particular visible church, who have embraced one Confession of Faith, one Form of Church government, one Directory for Worship may require it of all her members, in order to full communion in all sealing ordinances, that they confess, acknowledge and swear to abide in the profession and obedience of the same doctrine, worship, government and discipline? Is not this public confessing and avouching of the Lord and his truths? Is not this necessary to the unity of the particular organic body? Is it not warranted from the word of the Lord? as Jer. iv. 2. Micah iv. 2. Zech. ii. 3. Is it not a very proper mean to excite all the members of a church to search into the scriptures, that they may know and be established in the principles which they profess? Is it not a very useful and necessary mean to preserve a church from corruption and degeneracy from such steps of reformation as she has already attained unto? Our author inveighs against our reforming period for making the covenants a term of Christian communion; particularly, against the act of assembly 1648, requiring, that all persons whatsoever take the covenant at their first receiving the Lord's supper. Our author has indeed given abundant evidence of his laxness with respect to terms of communion,

union, as I have already observed; I pray the Lord may preserve his people in Scotland from his lax principles. Our author brings no argument against the act of assembly 1648, but only in a confident manner tells us, That "the King of Zion never design'd to make it a term of communion, so as no serious soul, who might scruple to take that solemn oath because of some expressions in it, should not be admitted to his table." I shall not insist upon the invidious comparison that he makes, p. 168. betwixt the act of assembly 1642, and the *sacramental test*; the absurdity of it may be obvious to many. Upon this head of Christian communion, I ask our author, Can he refuse, that the duties we are bound to in the covenants are such as we are bound unto antecedently unto the said oath? Yea, we are bound unto every one of them materially when we were baptized. In all the exceptions that he has laid against our national covenant, he has not pointed at any duty we are thereby engaged unto, to which we are not bound tho' there had been no such covenant. I again ask our author, What if some serious souls should scruple at one or more articles of our Confession of Faith: Will he therefore lay aside the Confession of Faith when he baptizes children? Or, can any Confession of Faith be framed, but, according to our author's way of reasoning, some serious souls may be found who may scruple at some expressions in them? At this rate all Confessions of Faith must be banished out of the churches of Christ: This is indeed very agreeable unto the lax principles he has vented, but opposite to all the principles of the reformed churches.

He reflects upon the act of assembly 1639, Sess. 23. ordaining particularly, masters of universities, schools, and all scholars at the passing of their degrees, to subscribe the covenant: But, does it not well become an assembly to be careful that such as have the trust of teaching youth be found in their principles? And as for the matter of passing of degrees, why might not the assembly require of such, who were graduate in the universities, an evidence of their soundness in the faith? This was not a new thing in this church; it was ordained by the assembly 1581, and always practised in the universities even from the foresaid year to the 1638, as the Latin historian reports, p. 59, 63. As for that act of assembly 1640, Sess. 10. declaring, That any expectant who refused the covenant should not have liberty of residing in a burgh. As
this

this act is confined to expectants, so that assembly had doubt some particular grounds and reasons for a declaration of this nature; and, since I do not know their reasons, I shall not take it upon me either to justify or condemn the declaration: But, as it is laid in their act, it appears to be a civil penalty; and the most that can be said against it is, that it was a mistake in the administration. And as for that of the assembly 1648, Sess. 31. ordaining all young students to take the covenants. After the heavy charges that our author has brought against it, What is it that the assembly ordain? It is even this, That such as enter into the college who are supposed to come to the years of discretion, should renew their baptismal engagements to the Lord, or declare expressly their adherence to the same.

With respect to the Solemn League and Covenant, there are two exceptions laid against it by our author; the one p. 84. That all sort of Prelacy was not abjured by the second article of that covenant, particularly the scheme proposed by archbishop Usher. He ought to have told his reader what this scheme was; but, not to insist upon this, I shall only observe, That, in the first article of the Solemn League, they expressly swear *to the preservation of the reformed religion in the church of Scotland, in doctrine, worship, discipline and government*. I hope it will not be alledged that any sort of Prelacy obtained in the government of the church of Scotland at that time: Our Presbyterian church government was then in its vigour and purity, and our government is owned to be this covenant as a branch of the reformed religion in Scotland, and the swearers of the Solemn League and Covenant bind themselves to the preservation of this reformed government and discipline; but this they could never have done, in consistency with their acknowledging any sort of Episcopacy. When the author, from the historian he refers to, mentions some great men in the Westminster assembly, who would not abjure all sort of Episcopacy; both he, and such historians, leave a blot upon the memory of these great men; 'tis upon the matter a charging them with dealing deceitfully in such a solemn transaction. Likewise, p. 187. he lays another exception against some words in the third article of the Solemn League; " Might not (says he) some persons of weaker capacity, having the truth of grace, scruple to swear, That

with their estates and lives they should defend the rights and privileges of parliament?" To which I answer, That the persons of weak capacity, who may have the truth of the matter, will sometimes scruple at these things that are most obvious and plain; and in this case they should be informed and instructed. But further, as the case was stated in our covenanting period, an arbitrary power was claimed by the sovereign, it was likewise in many instances exercised; particularly, when taxes were imposed without consent of parliament as in England, and when the parliament was prorogued or dissolved at pleasure as in Scotland 1639, 1640, the estates of the kingdom did at that time protest against their prorogation as contrary to their just rights and privileges: And I doubt not but the subjects of the weakest capacity might have so much knowledge in the question as it was stated at that time, that they could with judgment and knowledge swear the above article of the covenant. And, upon this head, I may ask at our author, Is there not as much, if not more difficulty in some expressions in the oath of abjuration, as it is calculate for the ministers of Scotland? As for instance, when they are obliged to swear, *That they shall defend his majesty's person and government against all traiterous conspiracies and attempts whatsoever*, as also to *disclose the same*; might not some reckon it a difficulty to swear in such terms, in regard they cannot define or determine what they may reckon a traiterous conspiracy or attempt? Again, might it not be a scruple with others to swear his majesty's right and title to all his other dominions belonging unto Great Britain; in regard they do not know what all these dominions are, and it is like do not know what his majesty's right and title is unto them? But I doubt not but our author will reckon such who move these difficulties to have but a weak capacity, when they cannot understand such comprehensive expressions.

I have now done with the exceptions that our author lays against our covenants, and the proceedings of our reforming period with reference unto them. I shall now briefly consider his exceptions against some other acts of the said period, which he brings as instances of the faults, failings, bad and tyrannical acts of our covenanting period. The first that I mention is the account that our author gives us of a clause in the assembly's directory, August 24, 1647. for secret and private

private worship, and mutual edification, &c. Our author mentions only the seventh direction; but, in order to understand it, 'tis necessary that I first transcribe their sixth, viz. *Family-worship, a special care is to be had, that each family by themselves: Neither requiring, inviting, nor admitting persons from diverse families: unless it be those who are lodged with them, or at meal, or otherwise with them upon some lawful occasion.* Then follows the seventh article mentioned by our author, viz. *Whatsoever hath been the effects and fruits of meetings of persons of diverse families, in the times of corruption and trouble (in which cases many things are commendable, which otherwise are not tolerable) yet, when God hath blessed us with peace and purity of the gospel, such meetings of persons of diverse families (except in cases mentioned in these directions) are to be disapproved, as tending to the hindrance of the religious exercise of each family by itself, to the prejudice of the public ministry, &c.* Our author gives it as his opinion, that in the above direction, that assembly declared against fellowships and meetings for prayer and Christian conference. I know not what spirit our author is led in his manner of writing; there cannot be a more unjust charge laid against an assembly than this that is laid against the excellent directions that this assembly give for private and secret worship. Any who is not blind may see from the above articles, that the direction here given by the assembly is, *That each family by itself should keep the worship of God; and that which is condemned is, the meeting of persons of diverse families together, to the hindrance of the religious exercise of each family by itself; and this is what they had good reason to condemn, as having a tendency to all the bad effects that they mention.* Our author tells us from Guthrie in his memoirs, That the above act or conclusion was unanimously gone into by several eminent ministers, some of whom he mentions, who met to confer about that affair in Mr. Henderson's chamber 1639: That is, the act of the assembly 1647 was concluded by several ministers in 1639, even seven years before it was enacted. Our author tells us this story from Guthrie's memoirs. Several of his readers, and these none of the weakest, have therefore been imposed upon, and thought that our author told the story from one of these eminent ministers, Mr. James Guthrie. Mr. William Guthrie: But, to undeceive them, I must inform them, that this Guthrie was one Mr. Henry Guthrie, who

made a considerable profession of zeal for our reformation before the year 1662; but at that time he complied with Prebendary, and received the bishoprick of Dunkeld as his reward in the year 1665. I have sometimes made use of his Memoirs for clearing or confirming some historical facts; but in this place the Bishop tells us a very inconsistent story, viz. some, says he, came from England, who were supposed to favour the brownistical way; and others likewise came from Ireland, who betake themselves to conventicles, having forsaken the public assemblies of the church in Ireland: and he tells us, that they set up those conventicles which they called private meetings in Scotland; and that they were countenanced by Mr. David Dickson, Mr. Samuel Rutherford and others: but that the foundest of the ministers, Mr. Ramsay, Mr. Alexander Henderson and others (the bishop thinks fit to name himself among them) were deeply affected with the said conventicles doubting that the course might lead to Brownism; and therefore they purposed to have an act of assembly in the year 1639 against the same; but Mr. Dickson and Mr. Rutherford opposed the motion, and, instead thereof, moved for a conference, that brethren might unite upon the question; and that hereupon a conference was held in Mr. Henderson's chamber, wherein the above mentioned conclusion was taken. He likewise reports, that the keepers of the said conventicles or private meetings having become more numerous and bold, the general assembly at Aberdeen in the year 1640 took the matter into consideration; and that Mr. Dickson and Mr. Rutherford pleaded vehemently for the said conventicles, till Mr. Guthrie (that is, the Bishop himself) took the paper out of his pocket, which had been signed by Mr. Henderson and Mr. Dickson in all their names: and then, says the bishop, Mr. Dickson was silent; whereupon the act past unanimously against private meetings.

But every body may see that the above account given by the bishop is both false and inconsistent; there was no such act as he reports past at the assembly at Aberdeen 1640. No body that know the characters of masters Rutherford and Dickson will believe that they favoured the brownistical way, or that they would oppose in an assembly a conclusion signed with their own hands: It is plain that the perfidious prelate has laid the story with a design to defame these excellent and

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worthy

worthy men; and it is likewise plain that there was no meeting in Mr. Henderson's chamber, concluding an article of our Directory, which had not a being 1647, that is, five years thereafter. Therefore, if our author had not a desire to impose upon the world when he cites Guthrie's Memoirs, he has quoted him without any manner of judgment or consideration.

Our author tells us, He is far from condemning private meetings for prayer and conference; he owns, that fellowships and meetings, if rightly managed, are profitable: But in the meantime he insists only upon the abuse of them; he never tells wherein they are profitable. He gives us a quotation from Mr. Durham on Scandal, Part 3. chap. xv. and we have only the one half of what Mr. Durham says upon fellowships and meetings, namely, what he says upon the abuse of them; what is said by that great man upon the usefulness of fellowships and meetings, is entirely dropt by our author: I shall leave it to the reader to look into Mr. Durham himself. I shall only add, it is an unfair, and a very cunning way of dealing to commend the practice of any thing as profitable and useful, and yet to insist only upon the abuses of the practice, without giving any instances of the profitableness or usefulness thereof.

The author of the Essay, p. 33. observes, that the brethren in their Judicial Act and Testimony, p. 14 say, "That from 1641, the building of the house of God went prosperously and successfully till 1650." And then he adds, "But if the robbing of the Christian people thus their right to elect their pastors, and the many other bad acts made in that period, was a building of the house of God, I'm far mistaken." He gives us an instance of one of these bad acts, viz. "The assembly 1642, says he, ordains, not the congregation but the eldership shall have the filling up of vacancies in the session." As also, p. 14 he affirms, that the said act 1642 was a "robbing the people of all right to elect their elders and deacons." Here our author charges the assembly 1642 with a sacrilegious robbery; but, to vindicate them from this charge, I shall transcribe our author's judgment upon that act of assembly, *Full Vindication of the people's right*, p. 53. When his antagonist throws up the above act of assembly unto him, he replies, "I suppose all the assembly meant by that act was only this, that the session should have the first nomination

of such elders and deacons as should be taken into the session, leaving still a liberty to the congregation to add or alter as they saw meet; and if so, tho' that act may differ from what the apostles did, it will not be in direct contradiction to it." Our author's above vindication is indeed clogged with an if, after his ordinary dubious manner expressing himself. Tho', for the above reason given by our author, I shall not absolutely condemn the act of the assembly 1642 in the manner he thinks fit to do in his Essay, if it were a *robbing the people of all right to chuse their elders and deacons*, yet neither will I justify it in the terms in which it is laid, as if it were agreeable to apostolical pattern: yet, after all, the Presbytery assert what is true, when they affirm, That the building of the house of God went on profusely and successfully during that period; and, after the particular instances they mention, they declare, p. 18. That they do not intend to affirm, " That under the above-mentioned period there was nothing defective or wanting as to the beauty and order of the house of God, or that there was nothing culpable in the administration." I shall only add upon this head, that the act of the assembly 1642 has been always observed in practice since that time, and, for any thing I know, long before it. And if I may here speak our author's ordinary Dialect, or as he does in his Short Vindication, p. 4. 'Tis commonly reported, that a certain minister, who expresses himself with a great zeal against robbing the Christian people of their right to chuse their own office-bearers, observed the act of assembly 1642 in his last session of elders; I suppose our author understands me, *quis tulere Gracchos, &c.*

Our author, p. 33, &c. reflects upon that act of assembly 1642, whereby a leet of six persons was given to the king and other persons, that they might present one of the said leet to the vacant congregation; as also against the act 1643, whereby the assembly petitioned the king that the leet may be restricted to three. Our author grants, that, according to these several acts, the leet was to be made up with the *consent of the most or best part of the congregation*: Yet he subjoins, that the above acts were " a plain robbing the people of their right of election; for, says he, in that case they might never get the person they most inclined for, and who would have been their choice had they been left to their liberty

" in the election. He adds, That, by the act 1642,
 " congregation had not so much as the nomination of
 " of the six who were to be upon that lect; for the Presb-
 " tery had the naming of them all." The church of Scotland
 was indeed at this time under the yoke of patronage,
 under which she had ever groined since our reformation from
 Popery; but yet our author is very unjust unto that assembly,
 bly, when he affirms, that the act 1642 was a plain robbery
 of the people of their right of election. In their act they were
 so far from being robbers of the people upon this head, that
 they plainly shew, that they did as much as they could, in
 their present situation, for asserting and maintaining the peo-
 ples rights in the chusing of their own ministers. Our au-
 thor in his Full Vindication, p. 164. speaking of the fore-
 act, expresses himself in the following manner; " I dare say
 " was the church of Scotland at her next assembly to enact
 " that no judicatory should go into any presentation, so
 " to settle a minister upon it without the consent of the be-
 " or most part of the congregation; none but the avou-
 " of patronages should complain." After our author's above
 declaration, 'tis very plain that he treats the assembly 1642
 in a very indecent manner, when he tells us that their right
 &c. And, if the reader wants to be further satisfied anciently
 regard that all the judicatories had in this period to the right
 of the people in calling their own ministers, I refer them to
 our author's Full Vindication, particularly p. 181, 182, &c.
 and to his performance intitled the Search, p. 103, 104. &c.
 Upon this head I cannot but take notice of what is affirmed
 by our author, p. 32. viz: That the church of Scotland had
 done more of late to have patrons abolished, " than was done
 " from 1638 to 1649, or I think in any other time since the
 " reformation." But, whatever she has done of late, she has
 not done so much, according to our author's own acknow-
 legment in his above words, as the assembly 1642 did for
 the rights and interests of the Christian people in the calling
 of their ministers. The reverend author of Modern Eras-
 tism unvailed justly observes, p. 125. upon the act 1642, That
 " in the making up of the list with the consent of the con-
 " gregation,—the church maintained and retained their right
 " to elect their ministers tho' by the patron's title they were
 " miserably involved in the exercise of that right." Th-

more than has been done by the present judicatories since the patronage-act was past. The same worthy author has many other judicious observations upon the foresaid act. But, what have our present judicatories done of late years with respect to the patronage-act? They have indeed declared it to be a grievance, they have petitioned the parliament for the redress of the same; and this is what the subject may do with respect to any law that they apprehend to be gravaminous unto them: But, have ever the present judicatories judicially asserted the principles of this church with respect to patronage? No, they have not; yet I find the church of Scotland since the reformation has done so, particularly when in her second Book of discipline, which was received and approved in the year 1581 by the general assembly, they did in the name of a standing law declare, that the "order which God's word craves cannot stand with patronages and presentations to benefices used in the pope's kirk, &c."

I shall only take notice of another act of assembly, which our author very much misrepresents, viz. the Directory of assembly 1649, which (says he, p. 133.) "gives the decisive vote in the election of pastors to the elders only." And, p. 147. "It robs the people of their right to elect their pastors so far, that they had not the choice of any of the persons to be upon the lect for ministers, in regard by that act the elders only had both the nomination and election." Our author adds, "Tho' the people had a negative upon them, yet they might never have the person they most inclined to have, if but four of seven elders, &c. should be against the whole parish." Our author cannot refuse that the people had a negative over their elders by the directory 1649; and, if so, then it is plain that the people were so far from being robbed of their right to chuse their own ministers, that the session could not impose a minister upon them, if the majority of the congregation dissented; especially when it is considered, that according to the Directory, when the said majority dissented, they were no more obliged to give their reasons for their dissent than the session for their election, as our author pleads in his *Jus Populi*, p. 125, 126, and in the same place, when speaking of the affair of Aberdeen in the year 1726, he reports, that, when such as opposed the peoples being called as consentors in the said affair of Aberdeen, they said, *They could see no difference at all*

between calling them as decisive voters, and making an enquiry into their sentiments as consenters. Our author
 " And indeed I own the difference is but small, while
 " church of Scotland required their consent to be enquired
 " into, and people were not obliged to object against
 " man's life or doctrine." Our author, if he had pleased
 might have said, 'tis but a strife about words, to question
 whether the people should be called decisive voters, or
 consenters, when the Presbytery must stop further proceedings
 and when the session must proceed to a new election, if
 majority of the congregation dissent, without being obliged
 to give any reason for the same.

A considerable divine, who is sometimes quoted by our
 author, affirms, " That the right of calling ministers
 " not belong to the church representative, but originally
 " and radically (*primario & radicaliter*) to the society of
 " faithful, or the collective church, who, for order's sake
 " may transfer it upon the church-representative; and yet
 " the mean time do not altogether give up with their right
 " but allow it to be exercised in their name, and by their
 " authority, so that they may exercise it themselves, when
 " they, to whom they have committed this power, do but
 " ly abuse it *ad Mendacii propagationem*," i. e. by spreading
 a lie, or by giving out that the Christian people are for
 man to be their minister, when in the mean time there is
 truth in it. And I find our author, Full Vindication, p. 2
 in his dispute with his adversary, who alleged that by
 assembly 1649 the elders were considered as the people's
 representatives; from this, I say, our author justly concludes
 that his antagonist had yielded it unto him, " That the
 " assembly 1649 were of the mind. that it is the people's right
 " originally to elect their own pastors." Our author adds
 " If the elders chuse for and in the name of the people
 " think no man of common understanding can deny but
 " is the people's right; and, if their right, I see not but
 " must have a right to exercise it, unless they have ren-
 " dered themselves unworthy of it, or unfit for exercising the
 " of." From our author's own acknowledgment, as well
 from the ample negative that the directory 1649 gives to
 people over the session, 'tis plain, that the said Directory is
 far from denuding the people of their right, that it does

knowledge (as is well expressed by Turretine) that the right
 election of ministers is originally and radically in the whole
 body of the faithful, and, if so, then the election which the
 Directory gives the session amounts to no more than a nomi-
 nation of one to be minister of the congregation. Therefore
 our author misrepresents the Directory, when he affirms, that,
 according to it, the people might never have the person they
 most inclined to have: For, from the negative which our
 author in his Full Vindication proves to be given to the peo-
 ple over the session, it rather follows, that the elders or ses-
 sion can never have the man they most incline to have; yea,
 it follows, that they can never chuse any, with hopes of hav-
 ing him settled to be their minister, but the man whom the
 majority of the congregation incline to have. And consequent-
 ly, notwithstanding of the noise our author has made against
 the Directory 1649, as robbing in part at least the people
 of their right, I do not see that there is any prejudice done
 to the rights of the Christian people in calling their own mi-
 nisters thereby: And I doubt not to say, that if the Directo-
 ry 1649 were revived, and the method of settling ministers
 therein prescribed were faithfully observed, we should have
 no complaints thro' the church of Scotland of the violent set-
 tlement of ministers. The author of the Essay cannot alledge,
 that the formality of making up a lect, and of calling every
 one of the congregation, man by man, is essential to the cal-
 ling of a minister. According to the custom of the primitive
 church, the people signified their choice by lifting up their
 hands as the original word, Acts xiv. 23. imports: And
 therefore I judge, that our author gives a very good answer
 unto an objection that is frequently made against popular
 elections, viz. the confusion which must attend them, in his
 preface to his Jus Div. p. 6, "I do not think the votes of
 all, nor the vote of any at all, essential to the calling of a
 gospel-minister; for if, at the moderation, all agree upon
 a person, I see no necessity for a vote in the affair: Or the
 elder(ship) may be allowed to vote first; and, if all agree
 to the person voted for, I see no need of calling more,
 &c." He likewise justly observes, That it is the obtrud-
 ing a person upon a people, which only occasions confusions
 at moderations and ordinations. I also join with him, when
 he says, That, if the people demand a suffrage, it ought
 not to be refused; or, "If the people differ as to the per-

"see nominate, there is no coming to the certain know-
 "of their inclinations, but by calling them man by name.
 And I humbly judge, if the Directory 1649 is understood
 in its genuine sense and meaning, it grants all that our au-
 thor pleads for; and all this is likewise asserted upon the
 matter by the Presbytery in their judicial Act and Testimo-
 ny, p. 100, tho' our author has several critical questions
 on their assertion, Essay p. 199. with which I shall not trou-
 ble the reader, in regard I do not see any difference between
 him and them upon this head.

Our author frequently appeals unto a short paper, called
 Mr. Rutherford's Dying Testimony: He quotes it, p. 99
 and gives us a long citation from it; and concludes, that
 Mr. Rutherford's words show, "That the judicatories
 "the church were as guilty in the period before 1650
 "their decisions, as any thing that can be alledged against
 "the church of Scotland at this day." As for this paper cal-
 led Mr. Rutherford's Dying Testimony, it was published
 the year 1713, and recommended to the world by an anon-
 ymous author, whose preface unto it contains a variety of ex-
 cellent things: but since the said Testimony had not been
 heard of till the foresaid year, and since it came abroad
 subscribed by Mr. Rutherford, nor attested by any person
 who was acquainted with Mr. Rutherford, or who was with
 him when on his death-bed, this may give ground to suspect
 if it is altogether genuine: But, upon supposition that all the
 Testimony contains Mr. Rutherford's own words, the words
 quoted by our author cannot be applied to the period before
 1650, when the church was divided by the public resolutions
 that were then taken; for, immediately after the above words
 quoted by our author, 'tis added, "If the word of truth
 "the Old and New Testament be a sufficient rule, holding
 "forth what is a Christian army, whether offensive or de-
 "fensive; whether clean, or sinfully mixed; then must we
 "leave the question, betwixt our public brethren and us,
 "be determined by that rule." And I'm more confirmed that
 the words in Mr. Rutherford's Testimony point at the
 year 1650 and following years, when I consider the am-
 ple Testimony he gives to the proceedings of the year
 1638 in his letter to the professors in Ireland, which I
 have noticed already; as also, the large commendation
 that is given to the work of reformation, as it was
 carried

ried on from 1638 to 1649, is the testimony of the ministers of Perth and Fife, which Mr. Rutherford likewise

I have now done with examining our author's invidious reflections upon a famous reforming period of this church: I hope the reader will see, that there is not the least ground for the charge, that he lays against them of tyranny in the administration; and far less for his setting the assembly 1733 and other assemblies of this period on a level with them, as if they were as faithful in the administration. I'm sorry that one of his character and profession has done so much towards weakening the arguments that are taken for the purity of our reformation from that period; and that he has never taken particular notice of the several proceedings of our assemblies at that time, for advancing the kingdom of Christ, not only in this, but in all the three nations, which the ministers of Perth and Fife in their foresaid testimony did bear particular witness unto. And, notwithstanding of all that our author has said, it will be found that there is just ground for concluding, that the judicatories of this church did neither at the revolution, nor since that time, bear express witness and testimony unto the faithful proceedings of the former period, or carrying on a work of reformation. Our author thinks fit with a sneer to tell us, p. 133. "Of what advantage could it be, to revive such acts as that of the assembly 1645, in which it is enjoined, *That these who are taught in Aristotle be found well instructed in his text?*" It is certainly the duty of assemblies to be careful about the education of youth, especially in the colleges: We have had a swatch of it from the press, by a student in Glasgow, of the moral philosophy that is taught there; And I do not think it would be unworthy of the general assembly 1639, to give such a recommendation unto the teacher anent Aristotle, as the assembly 1645 did; or to recommend Aristotle's Ethics unto him instead of his own scheme, providing the recommendation is given with some such cautions as are mentioned in an act of assembly 1578*. And it will be a further evidence of the degeneracy of this church, if the judicatories do not enquire into that scheme of moral Philosophy that 'tis reported is taught there.

Tho' our author speaks every where in a diminutive manner of the period, which he calls the *extolled period*, yet I

* *Cald. Hist.* p. 829.

hope

hope all the sincere lovers of Scotland's covenanted reformation desire to extol the Lord, who, with out stretched arms gave a great and glorious deliverance unto this church in the year 1638. and who did make his great power to be known in maintaining, advancing and carrying on his own work until we did prove unstedfast and perfidious in his covenant particularly by taking the adversaries of his cause and interest into our bosom, as well as by other steps of backsliding from him; whereby he was provoked at last to deliver his strength into captivity, and his glory into the hands of his enemies and to throw his people in this land into the hot furnace of 28 years tribulation and persecution. And we have just ground to fear, that if the Lord shall enter into judgment with us, on account of the misimprovement of the deliverance given us in the year 1638, and for our manifold defections and backslidings from him since that time, a furnace seven times hotter than the former may yet be set up in Scotland, Amos iv. 1.



C H A P. V.

Wherein some Exceptions laid by the Author of the Essay, against the Act and Testimony of the Associate Presbytery, are considered.

I Have had occasion in the preceeding chapters to consider several of the exceptions that are laid by our author against the Act and Testimony emitted by the associate presbytery. He endeavours thro' his whole Essay to misrepresent the said Testimony, sometimes by his criticisms on the words of the presbytery, and sometimes he roundly charges them with reporting what is not matter of fact, and sometimes he condemns them as justifying what he reckons to be bad acts. I have swelled this book so much already, that I cannot at this time go in to all our author's particular instances; I shall therefore only now touch at a few of them which I have not noticed already, and such as appear to me to be some of the most material exceptions that are laid against the presbytery's Testimony.

The associate presbytery in their Act and Testimony, p. 17. make mention of the act of parliament 1649 as a laudable act; wherein it is statute and ordained, That the king, before he be admitted to the exercise of the royal power, assure and declare, by his solemn oath, his allowance of the national covenant, and the solemn League and Covenant, &c. as it is narrated in the testimony. This act our author reckons bad and unjustifiable, Essay, p. 201. And this, says he, is evident, because, "1st, The act declares 'tis necessary that king and people be of one perfect religion." This our author alledges to be contrary to our Confession of Faith, Chap 23. Art. 4. I believe our author is the first that has discovered the contrariety he mentions: It may be obvious to every body, that the necessity intended in the preamble to the said act is, that it is necessary for the good of the subject, and for the maintainance of their religious liberties, that king and people be of one perfect religion; yea, that it is necessary by vertue of the command of God, that both king and subjects be of one perfect or true religion, in regard the command of God binds all ranks of persons, the king as well as the subject; therefore the preamble contains a good reason for the act and statute. Again, our author reckons it hard, that, by that act, the king should not only swear for himself, but also for his successors, when none could tell who they might be. But, is it not as hard for parents to engage for their children, when none of them can tell what they may be? Was ever this quarrelled by any Protestant divine? Our author may reckon Moses' words to Israel as hard, Deut. xxix. 14. *Neither with you only do I make this covenant and this oath; but with him that standeth with us here this day before the Lord our God, and also with him that is not here with us this day.* But, as our author is singular in many of his reasonings, so likewise in this; for by the same argument he overthrows the obligation of all religious oaths upon posterity, which is contrary to the whole scriptures. Another reason to prove the above act of parliament bad is, That the king was bound to swear, "never to endeavour any alteration of the acts securing our religion: For (says he) some of these acts stood very much in need of alteration; as particularly the act of parliament 1592, which, tho' a good act in the main, says he, yet hadundry things in it very bad." What inconsistent reasoning is here? Could the
bad

bad things in any act secure our religion? Therefore it is evident, that, when the king swore not to alter any act touching our religion, none of the bad things in any acts were sworn to be maintained; yea rather, by virtue of the oath he was obliged to alter them. A fourth reason our author gives against the act of parliament is, That the king was obliged to take a most illimited oath. But, how was it limited? Our author tells us, "That the king swore for himself and his successors to agree to all acts of parliament joining the covenants, and fully establishing Presbyterian government." He should have added, *The Directory of Worship, Confession of Faith and Catechisms*; for these are likewise mentioned in the act: And I believe any body but our author will see that this is a very limited oath. Our author adds, "That, by the oath administered to king Charles the Second, it seems it included acts made or to be made: For," says he, the king was obliged to swear; *I, for myself and successors, shall consent and agree to all acts of parliament, in joining the national covenant, and the solemn league and covenant;—and that I shall give my royal assent to all acts and ordinances of parliament, past or to be past, in joining the same in my other dominions.*" Our author adds, "But the king is sworn to what neither he nor the imposers of that oath could know what." But, in the mean time, it is not expressly declared, that he should give his royal consent to acts injoining the covenants? And therefore both the king and the parliament knew very well what the oath obliged the king unto; but it seems a more than ordinary antipathy to our covenants has blinded his eyes. I know not for what reason our author has again dropt our Confession of Faith and Catechisms; for these are only expressly mentioned in the king's coronation oath. But I shall not pursue his other two reasons against the said act of parliament, in regard they have no more strength in them than these I have mentioned.

Our author, p. 102. tells his reader, That the second brethren in their Act and Testimony, p. 39. assert, That the parliament immediately after the revolution appointed the oath of allegiance to be sworn, in place of any other oath imposed by laws and acts of preceeding parliaments. Our author's first observe is, That the brethren never tell which of all the nine sessions of king William's first parliament it was. There are many such omissions in our author's Essay: We

sometimes search thro' a whole book for his citations, as
 the citations he gives us from Torretine, Essay, p. 27, 28.
 thro' many books, as in the citation he gives us from
 Urban, p. 63. But our author has fallen upon the act of
 parliament which he makes no doubt we intend; and, ac-
 cording to him, it is the second act of the second session of
 King William and queen Mary's first parliament. Yet there
 is no such clause as he himself quotes to be found in that act;
 but the reader may find it in the second act of the first session
 of the said parliament, where it is said, That "the parlia-
 ment do hereby retract and rescind all preceeding laws and
 acts of parliament, in so far as they impose any other oaths
 of allegiance, supremacy, declarations and tests, excepting
 the oath *de fidei*." And this act of parliament bears an
 express reference unto the *Claim of Right*, the last article
 whereof declares, "That the oath hereafter mentioned (*viz.*
 the oath of allegiance) be taken by all Protestants, of whom
 the oath of allegiance and any other oaths and declarations
 might be required by law, instead of them; and that the
 said oath of allegiance, and other oaths and declarations,
 may be abrogated." Our author thinks fit to exclaim a-
 gainst the brethren, and alleges, That they take a liberty of
 altering and changing the words of acts of parliament, that
 they make them speak what they never intended; he likewise
 alleges, that nothing is meant by the oaths mentioned in the
 act of parliament and claim of right, but the sinful oaths in
 the former period, which were still in force by law, &c. But
 the brethren in their Testimony did foresee the above objec-
 tion, and therefore they explain themselves in the following
 manner; "Yet, say they, the terms in which the act of par-
 liament is conceived appear plainly to exclude the oath of
 the covenant, which contained a very solemn test of allegi-
 ance to the sovereign; especially when it is considered, that
 the above mentioned act rescissory was not repealed." By
 the act rescissory they mean, the act passed in the first session
 of King Charles II's parliament, anno 1661, whereby all the
 parliaments of our reforming period, as also all their acts and
 deeds, were declared null and void. Hence it is obvious,
 that the strength of the brethren's reasonings upon this head
 does not lean to the words of the act of parliament rescinding
 preceeding laws,—in so far as they impose any other oaths
 of allegiance, &c. but they assert what is plain matter of fact,
 viz.

viz. That our covenant allegiance was left buried by the parliament 1690; and that, instead of reviving our covenant-allegiance, the oath of allegiance contained in their act is imposed; and therefore they justly argue, that the above act of parliament is conceived in such terms, as appear plainly to exclude the oath of the covenant: And for this same reason they affirm, p. 46. " That the oath of abjuration, together
 " with the allegiance, is substitute in the room of our solemn
 " national covenants, which contain the strictest engagements
 " of duty to the sovereign, a most solemn renunciation of Popery, and consequently of all Popish pretenders whatsoever." As for what our author alledges, p. 107. " To me, says
 " he, it is unfair in the brethren, and these who now exclaim
 " against the abjuration, that they never mention the different forms or draughts thereof, as if there had not been
 " the least appearance of difference between them, &c." I answer, They did not think it needful to mention these different forms or draughts, in regard they judged that, in all its several forms and draughts, the united constitution was homologate.

The author of the Essay charges the brethren with asserting in their Testimony several things which are not matter of fact; as Essay, p. 91. he says, They assert, all the Prelates were deposed from the ministry (*viz.* by the assembly 1638) Act and Testimony, p. 14 and 40. This, says our author, is not matter of fact. But the brethren say no such thing as our author alledges: For, in both places quoted by him, they say only that all the bishops were deposed; these words, *from the ministry*, are an addition of his own, that he may the more easily fix a falshood upon the Testimony. But 'tis plain, that all the Prelates were deposed by the assembly 1638 from their pretended Episcopal function: Two of them were suspended only from the ministry for the reasons I have already given: And, when the brethren say they were all deposed, they speak according to the title of the several acts relative unto them; they speak likewise in the stile of all the writers at that time, and in the exprefs words of the ministers of Perth and Fife in their testimony.

The author of the Essay, p. 97. takes notice of the following assertion in the Act and Testimony, p. 42. where, speaking of the declarations of the commission of the general assembly in their petitions against the union, they say, " But, as the
 " ensuing

ensuing general assembly only approved of the proceedings of this commission in common form, without an express approbation of their conduct in this particular, tho' matters of less moment have sometimes been particularly noticed," &c. Our author affirms, That in this two or three things are asserted by the presbytery which are not matter of fact. The first instance that he gives is, That the assembly, in ratifying the proceedings of that commission, commended and thanked them for their great zeal, faithfulness and diligence. "Now, says he, in giving their zeal and faithfulness, the epithet of the great, this was out of the common form, and more than any of our assemblies use to do in approving their commissions." But our author is very much mistaken: For the epithet of *Great* is sometimes given to the zeal, faithfulness and diligence of the commission, and sometimes the epithet *Much*, and this will be found to be a frequent and common form for a considerable time after the revolution; and the difference between *great zeal* and *much zeal* is not very material. The assembly 1703 approve of their commission for their great pains and diligence in the affairs referred to them; the assembly 1700 approve of their commission for much diligence and faithfulness; so the assembly 1697 use the term *much*; and the assembly 1695 commend two former commissions, as evidencing in their proceedings *much* wisdom—and commendable zeal: Likewise the assembly 1701 approve of the proceedings of a commission of the former assembly, as evidencing *much* wisdom,—zeal and faithfulness. Another mistake that he charges the presbytery with is, That they say, *Sometimes matters of less moment have been particularly noticed*. Upon this he observes, That, in approving the commission in all our acts since the revolution, the assembly have never noticed any affairs in particular. It had been more for our author's honour, if he had consulted the registers more exactly, before he had charged the judicial act and testimony in such broad terms, as asserting things that are not matter of fact: For the assembly 1714, in their approbation of the proceedings of the commission of the former general assembly, do deservedly take particular notice of the zeal of that commission against Popery and a Popish pretender, expressed in that excellent paper, their *Seasonable Warning*; which approbation is recorded among the printed acts of that year.

year. Also, the general assembly 1735 approve of the preceding commission; and, in particular, they got the assembly's thanks for their care, in causing application to be made to the king and parliament for the repeal of the patronage-act as is to be seen in the index of the unprinted acts that year. Whether these things are of less moment than the union, not the present question; but it may be safely said, That the addresses of the commission relative to the union deserved least an equal regard.

Our author, p. 98. after his usual manner, makes a retreat to our reforming period, and tells us, *For as momentous an affair the solemn acknowledgement of public sins, and engagement to duties, drawn up by the commission of the assembly 1648, was; yet the assembly 1649 never took the least notice of it.* But our author might have known, that the covenant was sworn with the above acknowledgement of sins and engagement to duties according to an act of the commission, with concurrence of the estates of parliament, by all ranks of persons in Scotland before the meeting of the assembly 1649, and consequently, the commission's act had the particular and express approbation of all the synods and presbyteries, yeomanry and of all the ministers and members of the church of Scotland before the said meeting of assembly: Therefore there was not the least occasion for the assembly 1649 to make particular mention of it in their act approving the proceedings of the said commission. But we find that they make a reference unto it once and again, as a deed approved and justified by the whole church of Scotland: As for instance, in the *Seasonable and Necessary Warning*, July 27th, Self. 27. they have these words, "It is matter of exceeding great sorrow to think upon the ignorance and profanity, the impenitence and security that still abounds in the land, notwithstanding—of our late solemn confession of sins, and engagement unto duties, sealed with the renewing of the covenant and oath of God." And in their act ancient catechising, June 30th, "The general assembly taking into their serious consideration the great darkness and ignorance wherein a great part of this kingdom lieth, together with the late solemn engagement to use all means for remedy thereof do ordain, &c." Our author then writes at random, as

are observed he frequently does, when he tells us, that the assembly 1649 never took the least notice of the solemn acknowledgement of sins and engagement to duties. Whether he has read the acts of assembly or not, I shall not determine; but, if he has read them, he seems to me to have designed to palm it upon the world, that the assembly 1649 had as little regard to the renewing of the covenant as the present judicatories seem to have. I might likewise here observe, that the author of the Essay is also mistaken, when he affirms, That, in all our old acts from 1638 to 1650, there is but one instance of any particular deed of the commissions of the several assemblies noticed, *viz.* that which he mentions in the year 1648. I shall not give the reader the trouble of transcribing, but refer him or our author to assembly 1645, sess. 18. and assembly 1649, sess. 19. where he may see, that the deeds of several commissions have been particularly noticed by several assemblies; and other instances might be given, if it were needful.

The seceding brethren in their Act and Testimony, p. 41. observe from the Index of the unprinted acts 1690, a declaration made by the moderator, "That the assembly would depose no incumbents simply for their judgment anent the government of the church." The Presbytery add, "That is, they (*viz.* the assembly by their moderator) declare, that the perfidious Prelates and their underlings were not to be deposed for their treacherous defection from the covenanted principles of this church." Upon which our author, Essay p. 90. explains the above assertion of the Presbytery in the following manner; "As if that one principle simply, of a man's being for Prelacy, was enough to depose him from the ministry, tho' as holy as Cranmer, Ridley, &c." But these, of whom the moderator of the foresaid assembly speaks from the chair, were as the Presbytery observe, perfidious Prelates, and guilty of a treacherous defection; but such were not Cranmer and Ridley. If I should transcribe the apology that our author makes for that assembly, I believe any reader of ordinary capacity might think I impose upon his understanding: As for instance, when our author tells us, "That the moderator might declare as above, while perhaps the major part was against it, though they might see meet to let it pass at that time; or it might be the

“ moderator’s mind this was fact, and yet he laboured under
 “ a mistake.” But ’tis obvious even to the weakest capacity
 that as the moderator’s declaration stands recorded in the as-
 sembly’s books, and pointed out by the unprinted acts; so
 the above declaration behaved to be the mind of at least the
 major part of that assembly, and stands upon record as a deed
 of the same.

The author of the Essay, p. 151. charges the judicial Act
 and Testimony with five or six things that are not matter of
 fact, when it declares, p. 40. “ That it was the laudable
 “ practice in reforming times to condemn all steps of defe-
 “ tion, and duely to censure such as were guilty of back-
 “ sliding, &c.” I shall not weary the reader with transcrib-
 ing; if he pleases, he may compare what our author calls
 mistakes, with what I have observed already in the former
 chapter, concerning the difference betwixt the proceeding
 of the assembly 1638, and these of the assembly 1690. and he
 will readily see the injustice of our author’s charge against
 the Presbytery’s act and testimony. Neither shall I insist at
 this time on any other of our author’s particular exceptions
 against the said judicial Act and Testimony; I doubt not
 but every unbiassed and unprejudiced reader may see, that
 they are of the same kind with these that I have noticed, viz.
 such gross misrepresentations, that favour much of a spirit
 disoblige or irritate against the seceding brethren, upon some
 one occasion or another.

I cannot omit to take notice of one other particular in-
 stance, and that is, the treatment he gives to my reverend
 brother Mr. Mair, Essay p. 117. “ To affirm, says he, that
 “ judicatories of this church have done what in them lay
 “ pull the crown off Christ’s head, refusing to give him the
 “ glory of his supreme Deity, is an unaccountable and
 “ groundless charge, unworthy of the weakest.” And upon
 his margin he mentions Mr. Mair, Second Test. p. 113.
 When our author gives a reverend brother, who is very well
 known in his neighbourhood, such a diminutive character
 it argues such a bitterness of spirit, blended with such a
 quantity of pride and self-estimation, as I shall not say,
unworthy of the weakest, but I may say, ’tis not like com-
 mon prudence, or ordinary civility and discretion; especially
 ly when it may be found, that the charge, as it is laid by

the reverend Mr. Mair, is not so unaccountable and groundless as our author alledges. To support the above charge, our author puts the following questions; "Did it not ly in their power to declare the positions charged against professor Simson are truths, and not errors? Did it not ly in their power to censure any that would call them errors? — Was it not in their power to commend him as teaching sound doctrine? &c." The plain import and meaning of the above queries is, Was it not in the power of the judicatories to declare, that the great God our Saviour is not the independent God, is not necessarily-existent, is not self-existent, and that the three Persons of the adorable Trinity are not one substance in number? *Horresco referens*; it may make one tremble to think what liberty this author takes unto himself, in the above, which he no doubt reckons to be pungent queries. I wish he had writ with more sobriety upon such a grave and weighty subject. But, in answer to his above queries, if the judicatories had declared in the above manner expressed by our author, their declaration would have been a barefaced and express voting of our Confession of Faith to the door; and I doubt if it is in their power to do so, while the act of parliament 1696 ratifying our Confession of Faith stands: But yet in the mean time, if their conduct and behaviour towards Mr. Simson, and if their management of that process be considered they have, as I already observed, stript our Confession of Faith of one of the principle ends and designs of Confessions of this nature; tho' in the mean time it must be held some way or other, since it is ratified by the laws of the land. I must further observe, that our author cites our brother Mr. Mair's words after his ordinary partial manner: When the reverend Mr. Mair asserts, that the judicatories had been doing what in them lay to pull the crown off Christ's head, he adds. "Refusing to give him the glory due to his name, to give him the glory of his *supreme Deity*, by *resenting suitably the blasphemous denial of the same*; and instead thereof, have even kept the blasphemer in full communion with the church, and refuse all calls to lay to heart or acknowledge their sin in this." These are the reverend Mr. Mair's own words and ought to have been quoted by our author, if he had designed to treat him with candor; but it is upon such partial quotations that our au-

thor builds his leading arguments from authority. But, for
 further clearing of Mr. Mair's expressions, let me suppose
 that I should say, that the reverend Mr. Currie, author of
 the Essay, has done what lay in his power to weaken the au-
 thority and reputation of the assembly 1638, as well as the
 authority of the other assemblies of that period; our author
 according to his above way of reasoning might reply, did
 it not ly in my power to defend the cause of the Prelates?
 Did it not ly in my power to approve of their declinature of
 the assembly 1638? Did it not ly in my power to declare
 them a treasonable and seditious meeting, as king Charles I,
 by his proclamation did? But if our author, or if any who
 has writ against the assembly 1638 as he has done, should speak
 after this manner; it might be safely told them, that they
 had now declared themselves openly to be, what really they
 were, even enemies to the work and interest of Christ in
 Scotland; and it might be likewise told them, that they
 spoke in an arrogant manner as if they were independent on
 God, or without the restraints of his adorable providence.
 And this I take to be imported in the above queries proposed
 by our author. And as for the reverend Mr. Mair's expres-
 sions, they only import, that when the judicatories did not
 particularly and expressly condemn the several erroneous pro-
 positions vented by Mr. Simson, and when they did not suit-
 ably resent the blasphemous denial of the true Deity of the
 Son of God, but screened and protected Mr. Simson from
 the censure he deserved, and, instead thereof, kept him in
 full communion with the church; they could not have done
 a greater injury to the Deity of his Person, in a consistency
 with that profession which they continued to make. As
 for what our author subjoins, That the assembly in their act
 suspending Mr. Simson, have plainly asserted the *proper su-
 preme Deity* of our Lord Jesus. I have already observed in
 the postscript to the printed Letter, p. 37. That our modern
 Arians will acknowledge a proper supreme Deity in the Per-
 son of the Son, in a consistency with their own scheme; as
 also, that Mr. Simson will subscribe to the words of the a-
 bove act of assembly according to his own sense and meaning
 of them, without disclaiming his darling proposition, that
 the terms, *Necessary existence, supreme Deity, and title of*
the only true God, may be taken, and are by some authors
taken.

taken, in a sense that includes the personal property of the Father, and so not belonging to the Son; and therefore I shall not further insist upon it in this place.

Our author lays some general exceptions against the judicial Act and Testimony; as for instance, he alledges, that separatists may complain that it is very defective and unfaithful. p. 149. I answer, The seceding brethren did never pretend to emit a perfect Testimony, and I doubt not but they will readily acknowledge that their Testimony may have many defects: And if any, whether they are separatists or not, shall discover unto them any public steps of defection which ought to be testified against, and which they have omitted, I know nothing to hinder them from enlarging their Testimony upon a proper occasion. As for the defects that are alledged by our author, I have already taken notice of some of them; and, as for others of them, it does not appear to me that they deserve any regard. Our author also alledges, That the judicial Act and Testimony is not plain, p. 150. But I still judged, that it was more plain than pleasant to many. As for the instances that our author gives, I shall leave it to the reader to judge whether they amount to a proof, that the Testimony of the seceding brethren wants any thing of that plainness that is necessary for a Testimony of this kind. Our author further alledges, p. 151. "Things disputed among the truly godly, learned and tender, have not been thought so proper matter for a public Testimony." But I must ask our author. Has not our Presbyterian church-government and discipline been disputed even by some who were learned and godly? Must we therefore give up with our government as improper matter for a public Testimony? Yea, I could give instances unto him in several articles of our Confession of Faith, that have been disputed by some who have been reckoned godly and learned: Shall we therefore, upon account of the errors and corruptions of godly and learned men, give up with our Confession of Faith? Our author's reasonings, as I have frequently observed, are laid against all Confessions of Faith, as a bond of ecclesiastical union and communion.

The Essay on separation is filled with invectives against the seceding brethren, and against such as declare their adherence to their Act and Testimony: But whoever they are,

that have declared their adherence unto the Associate Presbytery and their Act and Testimony, they have neither been forced nor compelled to this, they are all volunteers in the cause. And I have good ground to believe, that a considerable number in Scotland are moved from a principle of conscience in their declared adherence to the Act and Testimony; and that they are not led by any implicate faith, but by knowledge and judgment in this matter. When our author alledges, that there are many things in the Testimony above the capacity of not a few serious souls. p. 167. This is the very same thing that is alledged against all Creeds and Confessions of Faith: Yet, if any come in to the Associate Presbytery, and declare their adherence to their Testimony, who have neither read nor considered it, I shall condemn them as acting without knowledge and judgment; but I cannot condemn any of the adherers to the judicial Act and Testimony, as if they were led by implicate faith, from such reasons as our author gives: As for instance, when he tells us, p. 151. That the seceding ministers "have not told what are the many valuable pieces of reformation this church and land had once attained, which they affirm, Act and Testimony p. 47. were upon the matter given up at the revolution." But here there is no ground for the charge of implicate faith; for the Presbytery p. 38, 39, 40, 41, 42. do plainly declare what these valuable pieces of reformation were, which, they say, were not only neglected, but also materially given up at the revolution. Another instance that he gives of adhering to the Testimony by implicate faith, is a Latin sentence insert in the Testimony, p. 57. But, when the reader looks into the preceding page, he sees that Latin proposition word for word in English. However, it is not strange to see honest people run down as acting by implicate faith, and dealing in matters above their capacity; for 'tis long since it was said, John vii. 48 49. *Have any of the rulers, or of the Pharisees believed on him? but this people, who know not the law, are cursed.*

THE CONCLUSION.

Have now considered what I judged most material in the Essay against the conduct of the associate presbytery, their judicial act and testimony, and the proceedings of our reforming period. If I had noticed every thing that deserved animadversion, I had found enough in every page of our author's performance to have swelled this book to a much greater bulk. I have ground to make an apology for writing so much upon the subject, and yet I could not do less in order to vindicate the conduct of the associate presbytery, and for clearing the proceedings of our reforming period, as also for discovering our author's gross misrepresentations of both. Tho' I have frequently read over the Essay on Separation; yet, 'tis like, some things may have escaped my notice, which others may reckon material: And therefore, if there is need for it, I may afterwards publish an appendix to this book. I have not judged it worth while to enquire into his hearsays or private stories, as I observed in my postscript; however frequent these are with the author of the Essay, yet it is neither a manly nor decent way of managing a cause. And besides, if I had dipt into them, it must have issued in flat contradictions unto the most, if not all of them; and, after all, the cause in question would have got no advantage on either side.

But, in regard the author of the Essay, p. 104. with design (as appears) to throw a reflection upon my reverend brother Mr. Ebenezer Erskine; when speaking of the last form of the oath of abjuration, he says, *Of the lawfulness of which last form, the reverend Mr. Ebenezer Erskine was so much convinced, that he gave it under his hand to the laird of Naughtoun, sheriff depute of Fife, that he had clearness to take it, and should take it when required, tho' there was something peculiar in his circumstances, so as he would not take it that day on which it was taken by other ministers of his presbytery* This is no secret; for his obligation to take it was read openly in the synod of Fife. Upon the above story, reported by the author of the Essay, I wrote the reverend Mr. Erskine; and he gave me a return, wherein he expresses himself with his ordinary candor and ingenuity, and I think it not improper to insert it here: It is as follows.

R. & D. B.

IN answer to yours, relating to that paragraph in Mr. Currie's Essay which concerns me in particular, I have nothing to say, but only, without irritation of mind, to acknowledge, that I was so far overcome with the subtle arguings of brethren, who were clear about the oath in its second edition, as to declare that I had freedom also: But as I did not take it at that time, so, upon after thought and consideration, I saw just cause to alter my judgment, and declared so much in a letter to the laird of Naughton, which was read as I heard, before the synod of Fife. I shall only add, That I bless the Lord, that, when my foot had well nigh slipped, his mercy held me up, and I hope shall help and uphold me to the end.

I am Yours, &c. EBENEZER ERSKINE.

From the above letter the reader may see, that Mr. Erskine ingenuously acknowledges what the author of the Essay alleges, that he had once clearness to take the oath, but notwithstanding of this he saw just cause afterwards to alter his judgment; and I think this is no disparagement to the reverend Mr. Erskine's character. And the author of the Essay could not but know that he had writ as above to the laird of Naughton, especially if the letter was read before the synod; therefore it is not very fair in our author to conceal that part of the story, and it also argues an intention and design of defaming his brother.

I shall part at the time with the reverend Mr. Currie, when I have observed, That he fronts his short vindication with a sentence from Augustine, pointing at the great regard he has for his own character and reputation: But, as that great light of the primitive church was in his younger years dipt in very gross errors, so he was not ashamed to write a particular and honest retraction of them. And as our reverend author observes, Essay, p. 216. *Augustine was not more famous for any thing, than for his ingenuity in writing a book of retractions, in which he frankly acknowledged his former mistakes and errors.* I wish the reverend Mr. Currie would follow the pattern and example cast before him by this great man, and that he would reflect, with serious sobriety and calmness, upon the lax principles that he has vented concerning church communion, as also upon the injuries he has done to a reforming period of this church, whereby the mouths of many of our enemies are opened, and the present generation are hardened in their backsliding from the Lord. I conclude with the advice which he reports Jerome gave to Rufinus, *Never blush to change thy opinion; for neither you nor I, nor any person alive, are of so great authority, as to be ashamed to confess we have erred.*



F I N I S.

CONTINUATION
OF THE
DEFENCE
OF THE
REFORMATION-PRINCIPLES
OF THE
Church of Scotland.

WHEREIN

It is shown, that the Reverend Mr. CURRIE, in his late *Vindication*, has not entred into the Argument for Secession, as it is stated in the said *Defence*. Wherein also several Questions relating to the present SECESSION are considered: particularly, with respect to the Management of the Judiciatories in Matters of Doctrine, their Tyranny in the Administration, their like Sentence against the Seceding Ministers: Likewise it is enquired, whether or not such as are imposed upon dissenting and reclaiming Congregations ought to be received and acknowledged by the Church as lawful and sent ministers of CHRIST.

By Mr WILLIAM WILSON Minister of the Gospel at Perth.

Zion, thy God confess, Psal. cxlvii. 12.

Isa. lxvi. 5. Your brethren that hated you, that cast you out for my name's sake said, Let the Lord be glorified.

G L A S G O W:

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M,DCC,LXIX.

A . . .
CONTINUATION

OF THE

DEFENCE

OF THE

REFORMATION PRINCIPLES

OF THE

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CONTINUATION

OF THE

DEFENCE of the REFORMATION-
PRINCIPLES of the CHURCH of
SCOTLAND, &c.

The INTRODUCTION.

WHEN I published my answer to the Essay on Separation, under the title of a *Defence of the Reformation Principles of the Church of Scotland*: I promised in the conclusion of the said book, that, if there was need for it, I would publish an appendix to the said Defence, wherein I might consider any thing material, that had escaped me, which the author of the Essay had advanced against the conduct of the associate presbytery, or their judicial act and testimony: But yet, after the most exact search I could make, I did not find that I had passed by any thing of importance, alledged in the Essay against the conduct of the associate presbytery, neither did I find that I had omitted any thing of moment which that author had offered to discredit their judicial act and testimony; and therefore I supersede any further writing upon this subject, at least till I should see what the reverend Mr. Currie, author of the Essay on Separation, should bring forth in defence of himself, and of the cause of the present judicatories, which it seems he has undertaken to manage, against the associate presbytery. And as I was credibly informed he was preparing his answer to my book, so he has lately published the same, under the title of (what he calls) *A Vindication of the real Reformation-Principles of the church of Scotland*.

When

When Mr. Currie published his Essay, I observed that much bitterness of spirit breathed thro' out his whole book. He choosed rather to neglect the many evidences of it, than to take particular notice of them; such as, Essay, p. 194. He alledges, the brethren's departure from the present judicatories was far from being peaceable, says he, "Have they whet their tongue like a sword, and bent their bow to shoot their arrows, even bitter words? and have they drawn their pen and dipt it in gall, publishing to the world, that their mother at this day has gone off from her foundations?" The seceding brethren have affirmed, and proved in their first testimony, that the foundations of Presbyterian order and government are subverted, and the foundation-truths ly wounded and bleeding in our streets, without any due and suitable testimony unto them: Because they have laid open these and the like sins and defections of the present judicatories, therefore he vents himself in the above sarcastical manner against us. But, whatever bitterness of spirit was discovered in his Essay, it swells without all bounds in the present Vindication. He can scarce write a few lines of a fair face, till the flame breaks forth; there in his preface, he gives it as his opinion, "That my Defence is a common enemy to the success of the glorious gospel of Christ in the mouth of all his sent servants in this church, having a direct tendency to blast their ministry." Am I in my Defence an enemy, yea, and a common enemy, to the success of the glorious gospel? &c. This is indeed the peculiar characteristic of the grand adversary of man's salvation: However it is alleviating to me, under such a heavy charge, that the Lord and Master of the house was treated after the same manner; he was called a Devil, and Beelzebub. And whence is all this fury and rage against him? It was, namely, because his doctrine he laid open the sins and corruptions of the Jewish teachers; and therefore they reckoned, that his doctrine had a tendency to weaken their authority, and to blast their reputation among the people. Further, when Mr. Currie gives it as his opinion, that the Defence is a common enemy to the success of the glorious gospel; I wish he had considered that the question betwixt him and me is, Whether a course of backsliding from the Lord, persisted in and justified, is not rather to be reckoned an enemy to the success of the glorious gospel, than a free and plain discovery of the dishonours do-

to God by a church, in order to their reformation from them? It cannot be refused, that the prophets under the Old Testament, and Christ and his apostles under the New, did always lay open the sins and corruptions of the Jewish church, their priests, their teachers and people: Hence it is plain, that an endeavour to lay open the sins and corruptions of the times, is so far from having a tendency to obstruct the success of the gospel, that it is a special ordinance of God for promoting thereof; and consequently, when men hide their iniquity as Adam, when they extenuate the sins and corruptions of the time, however eminent they may be, and whatever fair shews and pretexts they may make, any performance of this kind may justly be reckoned an enemy to the success of the glorious gospel. I shall only add, That, as for the above grievous charge that Mr. Currie has brought against the Defence, I sincerely pray that the thoughts of his heart, and that the words that have drop'd from his pen, may be forgiven him; whatever ill nature or bitterness of spirit he or others may express against the cause which thro' the grace of God I endeavour to defend, I rest satisfied in faith and hope, that *surely the wrath of man shall praise the Lord*, Psal. lxxvi. 10.

One of the heaviest charges, that I have brought in the Defence against the author of the Essay on Separation is, That he has reported several things that are neither truth nor matter of fact. Yet, when I lay this charge against him, 'tis done in the most favourable and charitable manner: Therefore, Defence, p. 13. I say, "Tho' I have given several particular instances of things advanced by our author, that are neither truth nor matter of fact; yet I shall charitably judge, that he conceives what he has wrote to be truth and matter of fact." I again make the same apology for him, p. 214. But as Mr. Currie was first upon the field in his Essay, so he falls heavy, not upon one man, but upon a body of men; he charges them bluntly with asserting, in their judicial act and testimony, things that are neither truth nor matter of fact. It might have been charitably presumed, that when some ministers were met in judgment, and constitute in the great name of the Lord, they would have asserted nothing but what at least they conceived to be truth and matter of fact: But Mr. Currie treats them, as if they had intended in their testimony to deceive or impose upon the world; this behaviour I take to be another evidence of that bitterness of spirit that runs thro' his Essay.

When I have laid the above charge against the author of the Essay in the charitable manner above mentioned, he thinks to resent it after a very singular manner in his present Vindication, where he accuses me of asserting untruths, direct and manifest untruths, falsehoods, as also of slanders, and walking in slanders; those, and the like accusations, the reader will find every-where in Mr. Currie's Vindication. I shall leave him in the full possession of such railing expressions, more like Babbalanja than a minister of the gospel: I hope I shall guard against returning him an answer in such a rude dialect, The cause I espouse, and which I endeavour thro' the Lord's grace to maintain, needs no such weapons for its support, which are always an evidence of a bad cause, and an exasperated spirit, where raillery, banter and confident assertions must supply the place of reason and argument.

I told Mr. Currie, in the preface to my Defence, p. 1. That, if he thought fit to enter into the question and argument as I had endeavoured to clear and state the same, I should be glad if the Lord gave time and health, attend him; but if he deviated from the true state of the question, amusing his readers with misapplied quotations from eminent and learned divines, or with reporting private stories and hearsays, I would reckon I had more important work on my hand, than to take any manner of notice of him. And, when I have considered his Vindication, I find that he still perverts the true state of the question, and that he shifts the argument; as also, that he deals after his usual manner, by misapplied quotations and by reporting stories and hearsays. I might therefore justly have neglected him altogether: But, since I am persuaded that the cause which the associate presbytery have espoused is the cause of truth, and that it leans unto our reformed and covenanted principles agreeable to the word of God; I would therefore willingly cast in my mite, for clearing this despised cause, of the dust that Mr. Currie continues to throw upon it; and for the information of such as are willing, without prejudice and bias, to receive it; and likewise if it were possible, for the conviction of such as are wilful and obstinate gainsayers; as also, for the confirming of the Lord's people thro' the land, who have joined the associate presbytery in the confession that they make of the truths of our Lord Jesus Christ, in opposition to the many injuries that are done them in this day of general backsliding and defection from the Lord: And, for the above reasons, have I
adventure

ventured to write again upon this subject. And tho' I designed at first only a short appendix to the Defence, yet it has swelled so much upon my hands, partly thro' the variety of matter that Mr. Currie brings upon the field in his voluminous Vindication, and partly thro' a more particular consideration of some things I judge necessary for clearing the present subject, that I choosed to give what I have now written the title of *A Continuation of the Defence of our Reformation-principles*. Where I shall first make some observes upon Mr. Currie's leading argument from authorities; and likewise consider some of the grievous charges of untruths, uncharitable judgments, and inconsistencies, that he has laid against the Defence, together with his usual manner of dealing, by reporting private stories; and then I shall endeavour to evince, that he has not entred into the question nor argument as 'tis laid in the Defence. And, under each of these heads, I intend only an instance or two, to shew the reader how groundless the accusations are that he brings against the Defence, as also to satisfy him that Mr. Currie has shifted the argument, as I have plainly stated the same, for the warrantableness of our secession from the present judicatories of this national church. I hope likewise, that the instances I shall give will convince the reader, that it would be an idle work to pursue Mr. Currie thro' the several periods of his Vindication.

C H A P. I.

Concerning Mr. Currie's leading Argument from Authorities, and the Accusations of Untruths, &c. that are laid against the Defence.

MR. Currie, in his Essay and Vindication, fills his page with quotations from great and eminent men; on every turn he tells his reader, This great man says so, and the other great man says so. And in his preface to the Essay, p. 7, 8. he alleges he gives the quotations from them, with their reasons and arguments supporting their sentiments; and therefore he complains loudly in his Vindication, p. 5 That I have not attempted to take off the force of their authority, except as to

a very few in one section; and that I have not answered the reasons adduced by such great men, which he reckons I was as much obliged to make answer unto, as any thing in his Essay, &c. But I gave a reason, Defence, pref. p. 8. why I neglected Mr. Currie's quotations, viz. That the most part of his quotations are applied in a manner contrary unto the intention and design of the worthy authors, if the connection of the purposes which they treat, and out of which they are taken, is duly considered. And, to prove this, I thought it sufficient if I gave some instances from his most considerable writers: And therefore, Def. chap. 3. sect. 2. I make mention of severals of them, such as Calvin, Durham, Rutherford and Gillespie; and after I had given some account from Mr. Bailie of the principles of the Sectarians, against which the reasonings of the above great men are pointed, I shew the vast difference that there is betwixt the principles upon which the secession of the associate presbytery is stated, and the exploded principles of the Sectarians: And I likewise shew that Mr. Currie's authorities touch not the question betwixt the present judicatories and the associate presbytery, but that many of them are directed against the extravagant Sectarian principles that then prevailed. And, to satisfy the reader that my observation is just, I shall only consider one or two of these quotations that Mr. Currie insists upon in his present Vindication. The first I mention is a long quotation from Mr. Durham's Essay, p. 52. and which stands (Defence, p. 194.) thus; "Our Lord Jesus is no approver or countenancer of separation from a true church, for the faults of some members in it; neither do faults in some members, and defects in ministers and officers in executing discipline, pollute the ordinances in themselves, or to others who are free of that guilt." And here I observe, Def. p. 204. That Mr. Durham's words are plain and pointed against such who affirm, that the personal faults of joint worshippers pollute the ordinances in themselves or to others: But this is none of the principles of the associate presbytery; neither do they affirm, that faults in some members, or defects in ministers or officers in executing discipline, do pollute the ordinances in the manner mentioned. And yet in the same place I assert, That secession is warranted and necessary from a particular visible church, when in her ecclesiastical capacity she is carrying on a course of defection from steps of reformation once attained unto and at the same time refusing to be reclaimed. And this principle

principle is as far different from the above Sectarian principle, condemned by Mr. Durham, as East is from West. The reason why I have taken particular notice of the above quotation from Mr. Durham is, because Mr. Currie in his Wind. p. 189. alledges, I have dealt unfairly in the said quotation; and, in his boasting manner, "He defies Mr. Wilson or his brethren to instance any thing like this, in any quotation of his from first to last in the Essay." Sure the reader may think, that I have set my thumb upon some weighty and strong argument that Mr. Durham's words afford against the Associate Presbytery: What are the words then which I have omitted? They are even the following, *and so do not necessitate separation from such a church or any ordinance thereof.* Here then, according to Mr. Currie, is a strong argument from Mr. Durham against our secession, viz. Faults in some members, and defects in ministers and officers in executing discipline, do not pollute the ordinances in themselves, or unto others, and therefore do not necessitate separation from a true church. I grant the whole; and after Mr. Currie has got the words which I omitted, and which he lays so much stress and weight upon, What has he gained? 'Tis still evident and plain, that Mr. Durham is speaking against separation from a true church; which proceeds upon this principle, That the faults and defects mentioned *pollute the ordinances in themselves or to others*, Mr. Currie owns that some other words that cite from Mr. Durham prove indeed, that he speaks against the above principle of the Sectarians; but still he applies Mr. Durham's reasonings, against the seceding brethren; and to instruct the justness of the allegation, and my unfair dealing with Mr. Durham, he desires the reader may compare the 194th page of the Defence with the two last leaves of Mr. Durham's Commentaries upon the second chapter of the Revelation. And I likewise join with Mr. Currie, in desiring the reader to make the comparison betwixt the places mentioned, and let him judge for himself of the justice or injustice of Mr. Currie's reasonings, and of the charge of unfair dealing that he has laid against me.

Since Mr. Currie has challenged me, and the brethren whom he names, to instance any thing like the above, which he calls an unfair quotation, in all his Essay from first to last; I answer, I have given frequent instances of his curtailing authors whom he cites, and of his leaving out such sentences as are necessary to give us their true sense and meaning. As

for instance, when he quotes the act of assembly 1638, which he represents as a tyrannical act, and which is one of his common-place arguments in his Essay, he scarce gives us the one half of it; he still leaves out that part of the act which contains the reasons of the same, and consequently that part of the act which gives us the genuine sense and meaning of the assembly: And I reckon that an author is unfairly quoted, when any of his words are omitted, which gives us his just and true meaning. I give another instance of this likewise, Def. p. 193. where I take notice of a long quotation that the Essay gives us from Mr. Rutherford; and then observe, that Mr. Currie sets his thumb upon the conclusion of the said quotation, which is laid in the following terms: "Then 'tis unlawful to separate from the true worship of God, because a church is not constitute of visible saints and a people all taught of God." Whence I observe, that Mr. Rutherford's Testimony is directed against those that plead, that positive signs of conversion and regeneration are necessary qualifications of church-members; and consequently, that the seceding ministers have no concern in this testimony, that Mr. Currie alledges against them from Mr. Rutherford. I likewise reckon it very unjust and unfair, when Mr. Currie conceals the above conclusion which Mr. Rutherford gives to his argument. But says Mr. Currie, Vind. p. 188. "It was not necessary to give the above words." And why? says Mr. Currie, Because he cited Mr. Rutherford only to prove, that for all the faults that were instanced by the apostle in the church of Corinth, yet the apostle was against separation from that church, and, instead of that, commanded them to meet together; which, says Mr. Currie, "is a demonstration, that such faults as were in that church are not ground of separation from any church of Christ." But does not Mr. Rutherford give the several particular instances of the faults in that church, to prove that 'tis unlawful to separate from the true worship of God, because a church is not constitute of visible saints? And Mr. Currie may know that this is not a point in question betwixt him and me. Mr. Currie adds, "As Mr. Rutherford in his writings pleads against positive signs of regeneration being requisite qualifications of church-members, so he pleads against separation from a church of Christ, tho' her faults should be many." What then? Even so say I: Tho' there be many personal faults and defects in church-members, both office-bear-

ers and others, this doth not warrant separation from a true church of Christ. But unless Mr. Currie can instruct that Rutherford, Durham, Gillespie, and the other great divines he names, plead for ecclesiastical union and conjunction with a particular *visible church*, when she is carrying on, in her ecclesiastical capacity, a complex course of defection from reformation-principles once attained unto, and this notwithstanding of the ordinary means used to reclaim them; as also, that, in this case, these that desire to confess, own and acknowledge the principles mentioned, tho' the lesser part by far, may not depart from union and conjunction with the majority, and, as a separate and distinct body by themselves, make public confession of their received principles, in opposition to the injuries done to the same; unless, I say, Mr. Currie can instruct that the several eminent divines he mentions have pled and asserted as above, he may spare all his labour, his numerous quotations are all to no purpose, they never touch the cause or question as 'tis stated betwixt the Associate Presbytery and the present judicatories. The above instances from Masters Durham and Rutherford are two, amongst the rest, that I consider in the Defence. Whereas Mr. Currie complains of my neglect of many other authorities he has advanced in his Essay, I shall therefore give one instance of such neglect; and the instance that I give is one that Mr. Currie seems to be most warm upon, as if I had neglected one of his most material testimonies against the seceding brethren: It is a quotation from the Helvetian Confession, and it runs thus, Essay, p. 49. "We esteem so highly of communion with the true church of Christ, that we deny they can live before God, who do not communicate with the true church of God, but separate themselves from it. As without the ark of Noah there was no salvation, but the world perished in the deluge; so we believe, that without Christ, who offers himself to be received in the church, there is no certain salvation; and therefore we teach, that they who would live, they ought not to separate from a true church of Christ." Mr. Currie in his Vindication, p. 4 marg. note, tells his reader, the above authority "Mr. Wilson thought so hot, that he durst not touch it." He likewise concludes from the above testimony, "That 'tis evident to a demonstration, that the seceding brethren act in direct opposition to reformation-principles, and to the principles of the reformed churches." If what Mr. Currie says is evident to a demonstration, then to be sure the

above words of the Helvetian Confession contain some very plain and evident argument against the seceding ministers. And, since I must answer to the arguments that are contained in the authors that Mr. Currie brings against us, I must consider how the argument must be laid from the above quotation: And, if I do not mistake, it runs thus: They cannot live before God, who do not communicate with the true church of God, but separate themselves from it: But the church of Scotland, as she is represented in her present judicatories, is a true church of God; therefore they cannot live before God who separate from the present judicatories. The reason of the first proposition is, As all perished who were without the ark of Noah, so all must perish eternally who make a secession from what Mr. Currie reckons a true church. Mr. Currie's quotation must be applied in the manner above-expressed, if it have any significance at all in the present question. And, if the above words of the Helvetian Confession must be applied this way, I confess the argument is too hot for me at this rate, not only the seceding ministers, but all in Scotland who do not join in communion with the present established church, are all shut up in a perishing state; they are in the same hopeless and desperate estate with the damned in hell, unless they return to communion with the established church. But the words of the above Confession are not so very hot, but that I dare touch them without prejudice and hurt; and if their sense were not perverted, and if Mr. Currie were not guilty of taking from the words of that Confession, they would be found to contain a very great truth, and not the least shadow of an argument against the seceding ministers. The church, concerning which the Helvetian Confession speaks, is not any particular visible church, but the catholic church; this is the church which is there compared to the ark of Noah. Even according to Mr. Currie's translation of the words "So we believe, that without Christ, who offers himself to be received in the church, there is no certain salvation," they must be applied to the church catholic; for this is what is common to the whole catholic church, and not peculiar to any particular visible church. This will yet further appear from the words as they run in the Latin Syntagma, which, are, *Ita credimus extra Christum, qui se electis in ecclesia fruendum præbet, nullam esse salutem certam: i. e.* "So we believe that without Christ, who gives himself to be enjoyed by the elect in the church, there is no certain salvation." It is plain,

that, in the above words, the Confession speaks not of the general offer of Christ which is common to all in the church, as Mr. Currie by his translation would have; but of the giving of Christ to the elect in the church, in actual possession and enjoyment, which cannot be restricted to any particular church, but must be applied to the catholic church. And, who the words of the Helvetian Confession should be understood according to Mr. Currie's curtailed translation, they only import, that out of the catholic church, where Christ is offered, there is no ordinary possibility of salvation; which is likewise the doctrine, of our Westminster Confession, chap. 5, art. 2. And, from the whole, it is so far from being evident to demonstration (as Mr. Currie writes) that our secession is contrary to the principles of the reformed churches, that it is most agreeable to them; in regard our secession from the present judicatories is not from the catholic church, nor from the faith of the catholic church; as also, in regard our secession is founded upon a confession of such principles as are confessed by the reformed churches in their several Confessions.

I judge it needless to pursue Mr. Currie further in his argument taken from authorities, since I find no more weight in any of them than in these I have mentioned: I shall therefore close this head with one observation more, viz. When Mr. Currie finds our reformed divines condemning separation from true churches, he presently concludes that all their arguments may be applied against the seceding ministers: But, in this, he still begs what is in question; for I have still refused, and do refuse for the many weighty reasons and arguments I have advanced in the Defence, that this national church, as she is represented in her present judicatories, is a true church. I have granted, Def. p. 41. That if True church be taken in a large sense, viz. for these things that are reckoned essential to the being of a church, or for a church which holds, by visible profession, the essentials or most of the essentials of Christianity; then and in this respect this established church is a true church: And so is the church of England, and so are many of the most degenerate and corrupt churches that profess the Christian name. And if Mr. Currie will believe Mr. Rutherford in his Peaceable Plea, chap. 10. the church of Rome is in some respect essentially a church, and a true church. But if true church is taken for a church that has the notes and characters of a true church given in our first Confession of Faith, in the Helvetian and other

other Confessions of the reformed churches; then I refuse that this national church, as represented in her present judicatories, is a true church: She has no claim to these characters: she has forfeited them all, less or more, by her lamentable degeneracy and backsliding from the Lord. When our divine then condemn separation from true churches, they understand, according to our reformed Confessions, churches that profess, maintain and defend the true doctrine and the true faith; churches where ecclesiastical discipline is uprightly administered as God's word prescribes, and where the sacraments are administered by such as are lawfully called by the Head and Lord of the house to feed the sheep of his pasture. When Mr. Currie tells his readers, that Mr. Durham, &c. teach that our Lord Jesus is no approver or countenancer of separation from a true church, it is certainly a great truth: But as it is applied by Mr. Currie, it is, as he himself frequently speaks, a mere blind and fallacy; he blindfolds his readers thereby, when he would have him to believe that this national church, as she is represented in her present judicatories, is a true church. As I have proven the contrary, so I am afterwards to shew that Mr. Currie has not entered into the argument: And therefore Mr. Currie, if he pleases, may bring an hundred authorities from great men, condemning separation from a true church; but I cannot look upon any of them as militating against the Associate Presbytery, till Mr. Currie give more satisfying proofs, than he has given as yet, that the present judicatories have a just claim to the scripture characters of a true church, held forth from the word of God in the Confessions of the reformed churches. Therefore

I proceed to consider some of the grievous charges that Mr. Currie brings against the Defence. And the first that I notice is that of untruths, or direct and manifest untruths: And I shall give the reader an instance in two or three of them, and in the same order in which they lie in the Vindication.

The first untruth I am charged with, is upon the following words of my preface to the Defence, p. 6. "I have not observed that Mr. Currie undertakes to justify expressly any of the steps of defection, whether in former or present times, that are condemned by the Presbytery in their judicial Act and Testimony; only, he alledges as to some few of them, that they are controverted points, and therefore, according to him, not fit matter for a Testimony." The same thing upon the matter is repeated, Def. p. 138.

Upon

Upon the above words, Mr. Currie in his preface to his Vindication, p. 4. reflects in the following manner ; " 'Tis probable, that, by these expressions, Mr. Wilson would have the world believe I could not refuse that he and the other brethren have had some ground for all they lay to the charge of the church of Scotland in their Testimony and other writings. But this, says he, is an untruth, &c." I own, that I always thought that Mr. Currie acknowledged that we had some ground at least for all we lay to the charge of the present judicatories, particularly in our judicial Act and Testimony ; especially when I considered, that Mr. Currie professeth he would be glad to see a warning against the errors and blasphemous heresies vented among us, Essay, p. 174. as also his refusing to justify the acts against the protesting ministers and the Presbytery of Dunfermline, and his declaring his sorrow for them ; his owning that the church of Scotland may be worse now than formerly, and that she may be on the decline, Essay, p. 59, 28, 182. These, and the like things, made me think that he would not refuse that the seceding ministers had some ground for all that they lay to the charge of the present judicatories. And tho', for these reasons, I cannot admit of the justice of the charge that he brings against me, viz. of writing an untruth ; yet, if Mr. Currie will have it to be an untruth, *that he does not expressly justify any of the steps of defection either in former or present times* which are condemned by the Presbytery in their judicial Act and Testimony, I have indeed been mistaken in the charitable sentiments that I entertain'd concerning him, which his above declarations and professions led me into : And if Mr. Currie will have it to be so, tho' I am sorry it should be so, then let him be held and reputed as one who justifies absolutely and expressly the several steps of defection in the present judicatories, except their conduct in the settlement of ministers, which is the only exception he makes. But we shall see by and by, that he clears them of defection in this particular also.

I must observe, that there is one thing Mr. Currie does not advert unto, and which 'tis probable has led him into mistakes, both in that part of his Vindication I am now upon, as also in other parts of his Essay and Vindication, viz. That the seceding ministers take a two-fold view, in their writings, of the sins and backslidings of this church and land. 1st, The sins and backslidings of this national church are considered as they are grounds of secession : Thus they are viewed in the

the first Testimony emitted by them. Again, The sins and backslidings of this church and whole land are considered they are grounds of mourning, and causes of the Lord's righteous quarrel and displeasure; Thus they are viewed in the second Testimony, called the judicial Act and Testimony. Tho' many of the sins mentioned in the said Act and Testimony are the grounds of our secession, and considered as such in our first Testimony; and tho' I have viewed them as such in the Defence, and drawn such inferences and conclusions from them as I thought just and native; yet, in all the judicial Act and Testimony, there is not one word of secession, except in the introduction, which the reader may see is not a judicial Act or deed, neither is it conceived in any such terms. Likewise, the evils and sins mentioned are not in the said Act considered as grounds of secession; and the reason is plain, 'T was not intended in the Act and Testimony to state the grounds of secession, but to lay down the causes and grounds of the Lord's anger and controversy: The former was done in the first Testimony, and the latter is done in the judicial Act and Testimony; wherein likewise all ranks of persons are called to humble themselves before the Lord for the sins and evils therein mentioned. And however Mr. Currie may look upon some things, which the Presbytery have found causes of mourning, as controverted points; and altho' he may refuse to give his own private judgment about others of them; yet if he absolutely and expressly justifies any of the sins, backslidings and steps of defection, as they are laid in the Presbytery's act and testimony, I am not afraid to say, he does what he can to harden the present generation in their transgression and iniquity.

A second untruth, wherewith Mr. Currie charges me, upon these words, Defence, pref. p. 5. "Through the whole of his book he ranks the Associate ministers among the most rigid separatists, he joins them with the grossest sectarians." Mr. Currie in his Vindication, p. 12. says, "This is a slander and untruth, and groundless charge. But, has he not charged them with doing what they can to rend and ruin the church of Scotland? Has he not brought Masters Durham, Rutherford and Gillespie, in their reasonings against the sectarians, against us, as if our principles and theirs were the same? But says Mr. Currie, "The gross sectarians held many damnable errors, and uttered many dreadful blasphemies; whereas, says he, in my Essay, I have never charged the brethren with any thing

thing of that nature." I scarce think that we are much obliged to Mr. Currie for his compliment: If he has not charged us with the blasphemy of the Sectarians, he has put us in the same damnable state with the worst of them; since, according to his argument drawn from the Helvetian Confession against us, as I have already observ'd, we cannot live before God, unless we return unto the communion of the present established church: And, in so far, he joins us with the worst blasphemers that ever breath'd upon the face of the earth, unless it be such as have sinned the unpardonable sin.

A third untruth he charges me with, is upon my following words, Defence, pref. p. 8. "The most part of Mr. Currie's quotations are applied in a manner contrary to the intention and design of the worthy authors out of which they are taken, if the connection of the purposes which they treat is duly considered. I also affirm, that I have frequently brought some of Mr. Currie's learned and great men against himself." Whereupon Mr. Currie in his Vindication, p. 19. affirms, *That these are manifest untruths and slanders.* As for the first of these manifest untruths, viz. his applying quotations of great men in a manner contrary to their intention and design; I appeal to the instances I have given above, viz. Durham, Rutherford, the Helvetic Confession, and all the other instances I have given in my Defence. As for the second, which he calls a manifest untruth and slander, viz. That I have brought some of his great authors against himself; to clear myself of this unjust accusation, I shall take notice of some of the ways and means that Mr. Currie takes to evade the force of their testimony when I bring them against him. One way that he takes is, to slip them over, or to pass them (as he speaks) in deep silence. As for instance, when I bring an argument against him, Def. p. 50, 93. from Mr. Durham on *Scandal*; tho' Mr. Currie pretends to follow me foot for foot, yet I conceive he saw the argument so pointed against him, that he judged proper to pass it over. Another way that Mr. Currie thinks fit to take, to evade the testimonies of some of his own great men against himself; he alledges, 'Tis not easy to tell what is their meaning, as Vind. p. 63. upon a quotation I bring against him from Mr. Shiells: Or, that their words want to be explained; as Vind. p. 69. in a quotation I bring against him from Mr. Claud. Tho' I humbly judge, I had given (Def. p. 62.) the obvious sense and meaning of Mr. Claud's words; yet Mr. Currie,

Currie, instead of noticing what I say, and the argument I draw from Mr. Claud, tells us, That that divine has not a word explaining what he means by the words quoted; and yet they are very plain in themselves, and need no explication. There is a third way that Mr. Currie takes to evade the authorities fore said, and that is, he claims to himself the sole right of quoting them: Therefore, when, Def. p. 52. I say, Our author thinks fit to cite doctor Owen, I hope he shall not refuse me the same liberty; unto this Mr. Currie replies Vind. p. 57. "But our brother may know, that altho' I may cite Masters Ebenezer or Ralph Erskines, Mr. Wilson or Mr. Moncrieff against himself, he may not have the same liberty." I do not plead for liberty to cite any of Mr. Currie's authors against myself, I have not the least occasion for it: But I plead for liberty to cite doctor Owen or any other author against Mr. Currie, if I find their arguments support the cause of truth, which I endeavour to defend; and know no peculiar claim that Mr. Currie has to cite doctor Owen or any other. As for Masters Erskines, &c. I do not remember that I have made use of their authority, except in a reference I make to our first testimony, Def. p. 46. I likewise make use of the paper entitled *Reasons of Not-accession* Def. p. 112. where I lay their argument before Mr. Currie to evince that the sentences of the assembly 1733 were neither materially nor formally repealed by the assembly 1734, nor by what was done by the synod of Perth in consequence of the deed of the said assembly. And, when Mr. Currie comes to that part of my Defence, he passeth it over in deep silence: he very well knew that it was unanswerable. As for doctor Owen, I have sometimes made use of his testimony; but Mr. Currie excepts against any testimony I can bring from him: why? "Because, in matters of discipline and government, his sentiments are of less consideration with Presbyterians;" and therefore, in the business of separation from a church, his authority is of lesser weight, Vind. p. 17, 54, 57. This is Mr. Currie's answer to all the quotations I give him from that eminent divine. To which I reply, That, if I have made use of the doctor's testimony, in any of his peculiar principles, wherein he differs from Presbyterian divines; then his authority may be esteemed of lesser weight: But this I refuse, and I affirm, that I have made use of the doctor's testimony with his arguments supporting his opinions, only in such things wherein he agrees with our Presbyterian and other reformed

reformed divines; and, if Mr. Currie could have given an instance to the contrary, he would readily have done it. I shall not pursue our author any further in the charge of untruths that he lays against me: I shall leave it to the reader to examine them, and to compare them with my Defence; and, if he judge impartially, I hope he will find them altogether as groundless as these I have noticed. I shall only further observe, That when I have charged Mr. Currie with reporting several things that are neither truth nor matter of fact, under the charitable construction above mentioned, Mr. Currie answers to some of the particular instances, by telling his reader, 'Tis a *transient word*, Vind. p. 199, 216. and an *unsigned mistake*, Vind. p. 319. Mr. Currie pleads for charity, he commends it, and would have all men exercise it towards himself, Vind. p. 6, 11. but he discovers very little of a disposition to exercise it towards his antagonist, especially when he finds his beloved and dear self touched.

I proceed to another charge he brings against me, and that is of uncharitable heart-judgings, Vind. p. 10. "Of all the authors I have seen, says he, none are more guilty of groundless uncharitable heart-judgings, than our author in his Defence." For my part, I thought I gave as little ground for this, as for any of the groundless charges and accusations he brings against me. In my preface, p. 10. after one of his appeals to heaven about the design of his writing with reference to our reformation period, I tell my reader, "After such a solemn appeal to heaven, I shall judge charitably of our author's intentions and designs; he to whom the appeal is made, can only penetrate into them: But then I must be allowed to say, that the tendency and design of what he writes upon this head is to weaken all the arguments drawn from that period for the purity of our reformation." But I shall examine one of the instances he alleges of my uncharitable heart-judgings, and 'tis one upon which he makes the greatest noise, and expresseth himself with the greatest vehemency: The occasion whereof is this, Mr. Currie having asserted in his Essay, That a stop, yea, a considerable stop, has been put to violent intrusions for some time by-gone, Essay, p. 30. I give my reasons against his confident assertion, in several instances, Def. p. 160, 161. and I conclude them after this manner, "Does Mr. Currie think, with his fair and smooth words, to put out the eyes of men?" 'Tis indeed to be regretted, that the most part are so obstinately

"stinately blind, that they will not see the grounds and causes
 "of the Lord's controversy against us; and our authors
 "reasonings have a manifest tendency to cherish them in their
 "wilful blindness and darkness." Upon my above words
 Mr. Currie reflects in the following manner, Vind. p. 16
 "Here again, with a witness, Mr. Wilson takes what he calls
 "a jump into the conscience, mounting the throne of God
 "in judging not only the author of the Essay, but the general
 "rality of such as will not trample upon the light of their
 "own consciences, and go out to the brethren; for he charges
 "them with being not only blind, but wilfully blind.
 "When people are thus daring and bold as to judge men's
 "hearts. I am sure they go contrary to the royal command
 "'Zion's King, &c.'" To all which I reply, That, in my
 above words, I neither judge Mr. Currie, nor any that have
 not clearness to go out to the brethren; but I speak indefinitely
 of the grounds and causes of the Lord's controversy against
 us; and I affirm, that the most part are so obstinately and wilfully
 blind, that they will not see them: And I have good
 ground and reason to say so, in regard the majesty of God
 has given such sufficient means of light, whereby all and every
 one in Scotland may see and know the grounds and causes of
 the Lord's righteous quarrel and controversy; and therefore
 the blindness of such as do not see them, is a culpable blindness,
 and consequently a wilful and obstinate blindness. I am
 likewise warranted, from our Lord's express words, to express
 myself in the above manner, John iii. 19. *And this is the
 condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men
 loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.*
 Have I not too much ground to say, that this is Scotland's
 condemnation, that light is come unto them, whereby they
 may know and understand the causes and grounds of the
 Lord's controversy against us, but the most part have chosen
 darkness, i. e. they are obstinately and wilfully blind? Wherefore
 I have good reason to conclude, that Mr. Currie is too
 daring and bold, when, in face of the above express scriptural
 warrant, he arraigns me of mounting the throne of God, and
 going contrary to the royal command of the King of Zion.
 And, however Mr. Currie may palliate the matter, I cannot
 excuse his following words from a sneer, "Mr. Wilson has said
 "obstinately and wilfully blind; and it is a wonder he has not
 "said, judicially blind: He speaks as if conscience in all
 "the brethren and their followers were cauterized. What
 "becomes

become of that charity which thinketh no evil?" If Mr. Currie, in his sneering manner, thinks it a wonder that I have not been judicially blind; I tell him, that I might upon very just grounds have said so: And what I said not then, I say it now, that 'tis to be regretted, that the most part of this generation are judicially blind; and 'tis both their sin and judgment, that they do not see the grounds and causes of the Lord's controversy against us. I fear that word of the Lord has its accomplishment amongst us, Isa. xxix. 9. *Stay yourselves and wonder, ye shall say out, and cry: They are drunken, but not with wine; they stagger, but not with strong drink. For the Lord hath poured out upon you the spirit of deep sleep, and hath closed your eyes: The prophets and your rulers, the seers hath he covered.* Tho' I doubt not but some, both ministers and people, see, and are more affected with the grounds and causes of the Lord's controversy, than any thing I can pretend unto; yet Mr. Currie gives me ground to say, That he himself is too daring and bold, when upon the matter he affirms, in the face of the most lamentable evidences to the contrary, that the most part of this generation are not under a judicial blindness. And I humbly judge that I do not mount the throne of God, when I say, That he is doing what he can, by his above manner of expressing himself, to harden the present generation in their blindness; whereby they are ripened more and more for some awful and terrible judgment. As for his remaining words above-quoted, I am sorry to add, That they appear to me to savour much of the dialect of profane mockers, and of such who boast of what they call universal charity, that they are very innocent in any, but especially in one of his profession and character. I shall only add, upon the charge that he lays against me, entering into the consciences of men, That this is what Mr. Currie is guilty of in several places of his Vindication, as p. 203. he charges me as loving to quarrel for quarrelling's sake, and for slandering. And in the same place, tho' he owns I desire my sorrow that I have ground for the accusations I lay against him, yet he affirms, *It seems I would have been heartily glad to have wherewith to accuse him.* And, p. 293. he says, *It is to be one great end of Mr. Wilson's Defence, a design to slander.* The above expressions are more like penetrating into the conscience, than any thing he can bring against me from my Defence. Another charge that Mr. Currie brings against me is that of inconsistencies: I shall give the reader one instance of such inconsistencies as I am charged with, I may afterwards take

notice of some others. The instance I here give is, Vind. p. 27. where, says he, Mr. Wilton speaks of Mr. Currie's fair and smooth language in the Essay; *But in this, says he, Mr. Wilton contradicts himself.* But how? In the postscript to his letter he says, *He was sorry for that bitter spirit which I saw breathing thro' the whole Essay.* Then Mr. Currie adds, *What, is the Essay written with fair and smooth language, and yet with a spirit of bitterness thro' the whole of it?* Unto this question I answer, That man's words may be fair and smooth language, when yet they are full of bitterness of spirit, Ps. lv. 21. *The words of his mouth were smoother than butter, but war was in his heart: his words were softer than oil, yet were they drawn swords.* And, if this instance will not convince Mr. Currie that there is no self-contradiction in my above manner of expressing myself, let him call to remembrance Joab, who said to Amasa, *Art thou in health, my brother?* 2 Sam. xx.

As for inconsistencies, I have too much ground and reason to lay this charge against Mr. Currie himself. I will have occasion afterwards to take notice of severals of them; I shall only in this place give one instance, viz. Vind. p. 74. he says, "But for the church of Scotland's going on in a course of defection, tho' we seem not to be going forward, this is what I refuse; except as to some settlements of ministers contrary to the inclinations of the people." And yet, in the following page 75. he says, "Glory be to God, neither the greatest part, nor any part I know of in this church, has made any visible defection from the truth, by professing error." Does not Mr. Currie know that the judicatories of this church intrude ministers? Has he not acknowledged his above words that this is a step of defection? And do not the judicatories justify their intrusions? If 'tis an error, do they then not profess an error? And, if 'tis not an error, why does Mr. Currie condemn it? 'Tis indeed but rare that Mr. Currie calls intrusions by the name of defections: He owns they are bad things; he says, he condemns them, and that they are things he will never approve of. Yet I doubt if, in all these large professions that he makes, he is consistent with himself; in regard I find him writing after this manner, Vind. p. 113. "I humbly think the heritors-man, *ceteris paribus*, or when as well qualified as others, is to be preferred, for the good and peace of the congregation, and the comfortable settlement of the place." And this is the answer that Mr.

Currie gives me upon the following question which I put, Vind. p. 107. upon the occasion of the severities some heritors were used against their tenants, because of their refusing to go in to the man whom the heritors have called to be their minister. The question I put is; Do not the judicatories support and encourage such persecution, when they take the heritors man by the hand, and thrust him in upon a dissenting and reclaiming people? To this question Mr. Currie answers the words above-quoted. And what he affirms concerning the preference that's to be given to the heritors man, is that the modest enquirer and all his intruding associates have acted in their own defence, namely, That the people should stoop to the heritors man, for the good and peace of the congregation, and the comfortable settlement thereof; especially when he is as well qualified as any other that may be in competition with him. And who must be judges in this case? Either the heritors, or the presbytery? What is then left unto the people, but to stoop to the heritors, and bow to the presbytery? After this, Mr. Currie ought to tell to the world plainly, that he gives up with his *Jus divinum populi*, and his vindication of the peoples right.

There is another way of arguing, which I humbly judge peculiar to Mr. Currie himself; and that is, by personal reflections, private stories, and hearsays. When he is brought to any pinch or strait, he diverts into personal reflections; as, Vind. p. 39, 40, 84, 96. &c. Again, if the argument straitens him, he is sure to fetch a blow, by some private story or hearsay; as, Vind. p. 47, 327. I told Mr. Currie in the conclusion of my Defence, That, if I should dip into his private stories and hearsays, it would issue in a flat contradiction unto most, if not all, of them; and, after all, that the cause in question would get no advantage upon either side. From what principle Mr. Currie is moved, in reporting unto the world, in his writings, what this or the other body whispers into his ears, I shall not take it upon me to determine; but I will venture to say, It is below a man, and much more a divine, to manage the cause after this manner which he undertakes to defend.

Though I have hitherto neglected Mr. Currie's stories as they lay in his Essay, yet I judge it necessary to consider two of them which I find in his Vindication; because one of them concerns a reverend member of the associate presbytery, and the other concerns myself. The first I mention is in his Vindication, p. 47. upon the following question which I propose

propose unto him, viz. "Can he give the right hand of fellowship, by a conjunction in ecclesiastical judicatories with intruders, Arminians, Arians, or even with such as refuse to display the banner of a testimony against such corruptions and their corruptions, and after all say he is pure?" Upon which Mr. Currie makes answer, "The eight seceding brethren are not all free from this guilt, viz. of being intruders: And, says he, 'tis well known, neither Mr. Ebenezer Erskine nor I had freedom to join in the ordination of one of their number, upon this very account, viz. his intrusion. And he adds, That member hath never made any public confession, nor, for ought I have heard, any profession of repentance in private, for that sin in himself, however much zeal he may pretend against it in others." Here is a story laid with abundance of ill nature, and in a manner which has an evident tendency to give a deep wound to the presbytery's conduct, and to a particular brother's character; when in likewise he judgeth his brother's heart, when, upon the matter, he reckons the zeal he has discovered against intruders a pretended zeal: And, after all, he is not so ingenious to tell his reader whom he intends. 'Tis a frequent practice with him, to wrap up his stories under such cloudy expressions. In like manner, upon a question I propose unto him, viz. Whether intruders, whom Mr. Currie calls impious robbers, deserve that the censures of the house of God be inflicted upon them? he answers, Vind. p. 114. *Let the associate presbytery, if of this mind, cast out the beam out of their own eyes.* Here again he leaves us in the dark whom he intends. When I come forward to Vind. p. 125. upon the question between him and me, If intruders are to be held as lawful and seceding ministers of Christ? he answers, "I think the minister of B— who is now a member of the associate presbytery, is to be held a lawful and sent minister of Christ, tho' he had not the call of that congregation when settled among them." The story is again reported in the same manner, p. 193. By the two letters B—d must needs be understood the ministers of Burntisland, since they agree to no other minister of the associate presbytery. The story then comes out thus: The reverend Mr. Thomson minister of Burntisland was intruded upon that parish, and had not the call of that congregation when settled amongst them; and that 'tis well known, neither Mr. Ebenezer Erskine nor Mr. Currie had freedom to join in Mr. Thomson's ordination upon this very account.

As for what concerns Mr. Thomson's call to Burntisland, and likewise, as for what Mr. Currie affirms is well known concerning himself and Mr. Erskine, I leave the reader to the account that the reverend Mr. Thomson gives in the following missive directed to me.

R. D. B.

MR. Currie, in his review of your Defence of the reformation principles of the church of Scotland, having frequently made mention of my settlement as an intrusion, and violent settlement; I think it my duty to give you a short account of it.

"At the moderation, there were two calls, one to Mr. T. K. probationer, another to me; and they stood thus: The callers of Mr. K. were one elder, a few heritors, with the greater number of the people: and this was brought about by a gentleman in Mr. Currie's parish of Jacobite principles, having some lands in this parish, who, before the moderation, came to this place, and, by his activity among these of his own principles, got a great many of those who frequented the meeting-house to join with him, who otherwise would not have concerned themselves in the call of a Presbyterian minister. At the time when the two calls were upon the field, there was an Episcopal meeting-house in this place, which was frequented by many of the congregation; and these were the persons that the foresaid gentleman had influence upon. And Mr. Currie may allow me to know what they were that joined in this call: Many of them were very little to be regarded in calling of a minister; for they could not have been allowed to go to the table of the Lord, and so not to be regarded in the calling of a minister, according to what Mr. Currie has laid down as a principle. My callers were all the elders except one, who soon after came in to the session, and continues still in it, the greatest part of the heritors, but the lesser number of the people; and the reason of this was, Because the most part of my callers were those who had not join'd with the Episcopal meeting-house, where the English service was, and so could not but be the lesser number, seeing so many at that time did go to the meeting house. Mr. Currie cannot but know in what situation this place was then in, and how these that professed Presbyterian principles were opposed and run down. There was no presentation in the case, tho' this has been given out by some.

“ When the calls came before the presbytery, the call given to me was sustained and preferred, and no dissent, protest taken, nor appeal made by any within the congregation, but all fell in with it; and, when I was ordained, nothing but harmony, and all seemed to be satisfied. When the things are considered, I cannot see how my settlement can be called an intrusion; for I always took an intrusion to be, when one is thrust in upon a dissenting and reclaiming congregation which was not in my case. I may ask Mr. Currie, By whom my settlement was reckoned an intrusion and violent settlement? Not by the presbytery, or any other church-judicatory, nor by my congregation, who never did reckon it to be an intrusion, nor do reckon it so to this day: And I do not see how a settlement can be an intrusion, where none within the congregation did or do look upon it as such. Not by Mr. Currie, otherwise he would have signified so much to me, and should have done it, according to what we have recorded, Lev. xix. 17. But, instead of this, he came to Burntisland and lodged with me a night, not long after my ordination, and, so far as I can remember, excused himself for not being at my ordination, by telling that he was obliged to wait upon a lady at that time who lived in his parish, and was in a dying condition. And Mr. Currie has assisted me at solemn occasions, as I have assisted him; which either says he did not then look upon my settlement as an intrusion, or that he thought not much of it. I would know from Mr. Currie, who no doubt can best inform me of this, if upon better information he did not drop his dissent from sustaining my call, and if he told not the presbytery that he would have it expunged? If so, no doubt then he was far from judging my settlement a violent one; and, if Mr. Currie has been still of this mind, to be sure he has been offended still in his heart at me: And therefore I want to know what way he will reconcile it with the rules of the gospel, to have lodged this offence in his bosom, and never once to tell me of it, till he sends it as broad to the world from the press. I must add, that as Mr. Currie did never till now call my settlement a violent one; so it was never reckoned such by any of the neighbourhood that ever I heard of; and I am persuaded that it had never been accounted so by Mr. Currie, if I had continued in conjunction with the established church.

“ The ordinary effect of intrusions, or violent settlements, is a scattering of the flock of Christ; therefore I further want

to know, if Mr. Currie will say that my settlement in this congregation issued in a scattering of the Lord's flock: Nay, it is well known that the congregation, before my coming to it, was much divided and scattered, but was soon gathered together and unite upon my settlement in this place: The meeting-house did not continue but about four or five Sabbaths after my ordination; and, tho' a meeting-house was set up again some years after, there could not be got so much as the face of a meeting, scarce three or four in all the congregation: So that the Lord in his great goodness prevented the scattering of this congregation again. I take not the praise of this to myself, but I desire to give all the praise to the Lord, whom I serve in the work of the ministry. I am surprised that Mr. Currie should give it out to the world, and so impose upon them, that Mr. Ebenezer Erskine did not countenance my ordination. This is far from being matter of fact; for Mr. Erskine was present, and joined with the presbytery in laying hands upon my head; and, if needful, this can be attested by many in my congregation and in the neighbourhood who were witnesses.

" Wishing you much of the Master's countenance, who is able to support us under all opposition, I am,

R. D. B.

Yours affectionately,

Burntisland, Jan.

13, 1741.

JAMES THOMSON.

The above plain and ingenuous account that the reverend Mr. Thomson gives of his own settlement speaks for itself; and I leave the reader to judge for himself concerning Mr. Currie's ingenuity in the stories he reports from the press concerning the said settlement.

I proceed to another of our author's stories, and 'tis one that concerns myself in particular. And the occasion of it is this, Def. p. 97. I charge him with making a small account of the grievous backslidings of the church of Scotland from her reformation-purity: And the proof I give of the charge is, that in his Essay, p. 122. he says, *Most of the things laid to the church of Scotland at this day are only omissions.* And, p. 174. when he mentions it as one of the principal grounds of our secession, that no warning hath been emitted against

the errors and blasphemous heresies vented among us; the neglect of this, says he, is only an omission. I must beg leave to notice a twofold accusation that he brings against me in this place, before I enter upon this private story: The one is of citing his words in an unfair manner, Vind. p. 102. he says, I stop at the words *only omissions*, and do not tell what he adds in the first citation, viz. That he says, *I never read of any who thought omissions in a true church of Christ to be a sufficient cause of separation*. And, in the second place quoted he complains that I omitted the following words, *Omissions will not be reckoned a just ground of separation, more than it was for any to separate from the church of Corinth, &c. because they did not emit such warnings when errors had crept in among them*. I may tell Mr. Currie, I agree with him, that omissions in a true church of Christ are not sufficient cause of separation; but then he and I differ widely as to our sense of a true church of Christ. Likewise I observe in my Defence p. 98, that omissions may even turn the purest churches of Christ into synagogues of Satan; and that the omissions complained of in this national church are such, whereby she has forfeited a claim to the scripture-characters of a true church, and there I give my reasons for the above assertion. That Mr. Currie pretends to follow me foot for foot, yet he passeth them over in deep silence; and therefore I have more reason to complain of his unfair dealing with me in this part of his Vindication. If he had treated the argument as he should have done, he should have made answer unto the reasons that I have advanced, to prove that omissions may turn the purest churches into synagogues of Satan. As for what he adds concerning the churches of Corinth, Pergamos and Thyatira, Mr. Currie cannot prove that they continued in the omissions they were guilty of, after the admonitions and warnings that were given them; and therefore these instances are not to the purpose. But I refer the reader to what I have more fully said in my printed letter, p. 22, 23, 24. concerning the churches of Pergamos and Thyatira, which Mr. Currie has never yet answered. The other accusation he brings against me is, That my scope in this place is to blacken his character, for which (he says) he forgives me. As for the charge of blackening his character; if he lays himself open in his manner of writing to my just observations upon him, he himself is to blame for what he calls a blackening of his character, and none else. When he says, It is my scope in this place to blacken

his character, this is one of his uncharitable heart-judgments, for which I heartily forgive him. And, after all, it is truth which I affirm, even when he has got his words at the full length he desires, *viz.* That he reckons the grievous backslidings of the church of Scotland to be only omissions, or that the most part of them are only omissions; by which he seems to me to make a very small account of the departure of our present judicatories from our reformation purity.

I come now to his private story: Thus it lies in his Essay, p. 122. *Sometime since 1733, I heard a worthy minister, for whom our late Separatists have justly much regard, declare he did not think omissions in a church sufficient ground of separation from her, &c.* He repeats it in his Vindication, p. 102, in the following manner, *Mr. Wilson is far from being blate or bashful, to object this unto me, when his memory cannot but serve him so as to remember, that it was Mr. Wilson himself who declared unto me, He did not think omissions in a church sufficient grounds of separation from her.* And this, he says, was after the assembly 1734, when he came back with Mr. Wilson and the reverend Mr. Moncrieff from Edinburgh to Kinghorn. Upon the above story I must tell him, That Mr. Currie is far from being blate or bashful, when he brings to the press what he alledges did pass in a private conversation betwixt Edinburgh and Kinghorn. I havenot found within the compass of my small reading, that the most insignificant or the most trifling writer has treated his opposite in such a manner.

As for the words he alledges upon me, tho' I cannot charge my memory with every expression that dropt from me at that time, yet I can with confidence say, That Mr. Currie has misrepresented my words. My reason for this confidence is, Because I look upon the above expression, *That omissions in a church are not sufficient grounds of separation from her*, to be lax and unsound; and also, because they are contrary to my fixed sentiments, since I formed my thoughts about the nature of church-communion, which was long before 1734. And I have given my reasons why I judge that omissions in a church may give just ground and cause for departure from ecclesiastical union and conjunction with her, which, as I have observed, Mr. Currie has past over in deep silence. As to my thoughts after the assembly 1734, they are contained in my printed letter, p. 4. where I say, *I own, that, after the meeting of the assembly 1734, I was in much perplexity about our continuing in a state of secession; it occasioned many thoughts*
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of heart unto me, to understand what was duty in the present case: But as I had no hesitation about my duty, when I did together with my other three brethren, declare a secession from the judicatories of this church, in our protestation before the commission November 1733: so, when I have observed the conduct of the said judicatories since the year 1734 — I have been gradually cleared, and more and more confirmed that it is our duty to continue in a state of secession. Tho' I do not remember that I used the above freedom with Mr. Currie, yet this is the utmost that dropt from me in any conversation about that time.

The proceedings of the assembly 1734 made me charitable hope that the judicatories would set about reformation-work; but, alas! their after-conduct gave me ground to fear, as I express myself in the place above quoted in my letter, that the words of the prophet might justly be applied unto them Jer. viii. 4, 5. *Moreover, thou shalt say unto them, Thus saith the Lord, Shall they fall, and not rise? shall they turn away and not return? Why then is this people of Jerusalem slidder back, by a perpetual backsliding? they hold fast deceit, they refuse to return.* To which I may add, ver. 6. *I hearkened and heard, but they spake not aright: No man repented him of his wickedness, saying, What have I done? Every one turned to his course, as the horse rusheth into the battle.*

And therefore, tho' I desire to mourn for the conduct of the judicatories since the foresaid time, yet I desire likewise to bless the Lord, who cleared my way, and led me, by his good hand upon me, to join my brethren, tho' the unworthy thiest among them, in the testimony that is now lifted up for the truths of our Lord Jesus, in opposition to the manifold injuries that are done, both to his truths and members, by the present judicatories of this established church.

I shall only trouble the reader with another of his stories. I cannot call it a private story or hearsay; neither shall I use his coarse expression, a *brat* of his own begetting; but I'll venture to call it a *fiction* of his own brain: 'Tis upon the occasion of an objection that he makes against the national covenant, Essay, p. 185. where, having mentioned some words of the covenant, he adds, "If I mistake not, most part of the seven brethren, sometime since 1732, would had a scruple to swear" in the terms he objects against. To which I reply, Def. p. 280. "That Mr. Currie is very much mistaken; for all the seceding brethren may safely swear the covenant in the said terms." And I give my reasons for

for this, which Mr. Currie never offers to answer; but instead of this, Vind. p. 256. says he, "But 'tis observable, Mr. Wilson does not say they all will or are ready to swear it in such terms. 'Tis very probable his Defence was read over to the brethren, but it seems they have not allowed him to say they were all ready to swear it in the above terms."

I should never have thought it worth my while to notice what is above, was it not to acquaint the reader, that, whatever escapes or defects are in the Defence, they are not to be imputed to the brethren of the associate presbytery; for none of them ever read it, or heard it read, till they saw it from the press, except my two reverend brethren in the neighbourhood, Masters Moncrieff and Fisher; and they had time to read only some sheets of it. If I had not design'd to have published it about the meeting of the assembly 1739, I would have given the whole of it to be revised, not only by them, but also by the other brethren in the presbytery; and in this case it would have come abroad with greater advantage: But tho' it comes abroad under this disadvantage, yet I humbly judge that the argument for secession, as I have laid it, stands its grounds against any thing Mr. Currie has said in his Vindication, as I am afterwards to shew.

Mr. Currie sometimes speaks as if he were writing against a deed of the whole associate presbytery, as Vind. p. 2. It seems he conceives himself such a mighty champion for the cause of the present judicatories, that all the seceding brethren must lay their heads together, to answer his writings: But I can assure him, they had never such an high opinion of them, and that they judge they have more important work on their hands, than to take any manner of notice of his performances. I can also assure him, that, in the management of the present debate, he has only to deal with one of the associate presbytery, and with one who reckons himself more insufficient than any of his brethren for engaging in it, but who was led into it in the manner he reports, Def. p. 14. And as he is persuaded of the justness and goodness of the cause; so, desiring to depend upon the grace and strength of the Lord Jesus, he is not afraid to go forth against Mr. Currie, even when he takes the field arm'd cap-a-pee with the names of great authors, private stories and hearsays, and with the grievous accusations of untruths, inconsistencies and slanders, &c. Mr. Currie thinks fit, in his Vindication, sometimes to tell his reader, That Mr. Wilson, or some others for him,

him, has wrote so and so. I shall not pretend to tell what purpose he intends to serve by such insinuations; I shall only say, That I doubt not of the truth of what some alledge that, since the reverend brother who was his ordinary assistant in his former writings is now removed by death, he has now and then borrowed the pen of some of his new friends, it may be the modest and humble enquirer, and his associates: But whatever is in this, I hope Mr. Currie will not accuse me want of due respect unto him, if I sometimes answer him in his above dialect,

I have now done with the greatest part of Mr. Currie's Vindication; and I doubt not but he will alledge, as Viney p. 8. "Mr. Wilson (says he) hath a dextrous and easy way of answering what is unanswerable, and that is by passing over in profound silence." For my part, I shall not be vain as to say, that any thing I have offered upon the subject of secession is unanswerable; I know a good cause may have a weak defender: But I shall leave Mr. Currie to his self-confident boastings, when I have made two observations; the one is, That I reckon the argument from the words of Mr. Durham in the place above directed unto, as also the argument I have brought against Mr. Currie from the paper, entitled, *Reasons of Not-accession*, quoted also above, both unanswerable; and therefore Mr. Currie has passed them over in profound silence. Other instances of this nature may afterwards fall in my way. The other observation I make is That Mr. Currie has past over in profound silence many of the arguments for secession from the present judicatories; and such of them as he has touched, tho' I shall not say they are unanswerable, yet I'll venture to say, that Mr. Currie has said nothing to take off the force and weight that is in them. I shall give some instances for proof of this, after I have considered how Mr. Currie deals in stating the question, to which I now proceed.

C H A P. II.

Wherein it is shown, in some few Instances, that Mr. Currie does not enter into the true State of the Question betwixt the Associate Presbytery and the present Judicatories.

I judged it necessary, in the Defence, to give a short historical account of some contendings in a way of church-communion, for some years immediately before the secession was stated. This I thought needful to clear the state of the question, and to justify the conduct of the seceding brethren: Therefore I take notice, in my introduction to the said Defence, that testimonies against the backslidings of a church, in a way of communion with the backsliding party, must be given in one of the three following ways: Either doctrinally from the pulpit; or by protestation and dissents in judicatories; or by petitions and representations unto them from such ministers or other church-members as are grieved with their proceedings.

I give instances in each of the above particulars, in my introduction, to shew that there was a gradual contending in a way of church-communion with the present judicatories, before any secession was stated from them: As also I shew, that the several ways of contending above mentioned were condemned by the judicatories; yea, that they were so resolute in their backsliding course, that they thrust out some ministers from communion with them, merely for contending in one of the ways above mentioned, viz. by a protestation, for their own exoneration against the course of defection that was carrying on. The instances that I give in my introduction are plain matter of fact; they are not, nor can they be, refused by Mr. Currie; tho' he spends his time upon some unnecessary wranglings, which I do not think worth my while to notice: Such as, when he alledges, Vind. p. 30. That the above enumeration I give of the ways and means of testifying is not compleat; and the refusing petitions and representations was but the deed of one assembly, and therefore the argument is only from a particular to a general. But that which I here mainly intend is, to inform the reader, That
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the design of the above-mentioned narrative is to confirm an observation that I made, *printed Letter*, p. 7. viz. "That when the bulk and body of the office-bearers of a church carry on a course of defection, and when the smaller part are grieved with their proceedings, they ought to use proper means for reclaiming their sinning and offending brethren, before they associate together by themselves for the exercise of the keys: It may be necessary to deal with them to return to their duty, by petitions, representations, doctrinal testimonies and the like." Likewise, I observe "That when the smaller part, that desire to keep the word of the Lord's patience, have tried the above and the like means without success; and when, notwithstanding of remonstrances in judicatories and doctrinal testimonies against them, the majority of the office-bearers of a church go on resolutely in a course of defection from the Lord; then 'tis the duty of such as would desire to be found faithful, though they may be few in number, to associate together for the exercise of the keys of government and discipline, for the ends for which they are committed unto them by the glorious head of the church." And here, I further notice That the above mentioned means ought in a particular manner to be used before a secession is made from such with whom we have been in ecclesiastical communion. And the case stands thus with the seceding ministers; they were formerly in ecclesiastical communion with the present judicatories, and they found that a course of defection was carried on by the said judicatories, and they tried all means that lay in their power and which they thought proper, for stopping the current of defection; they joined in presbyterial instructions to the several assemblies; they tried petitions, representations, and doctrinal testimonies; they tried dissents and protestations, for their exoneration; they continued testifying after this manner till the judicatories thrust some of them out from their communion, *anno* 1733. Therefore, as I observe in the close of the introduction, the question comes out in this shape, Whether or not 'tis their duty to continue to testify against a course of defection, in the situation into which they have been brought by the holy and wise providence of God? Or, the question comes out after this manner, Whether or not, when the judicatories of this established church are carrying on a course of defection in face of manifold remonstrances against their sinful proceedings; yea, Whether or not, when they refuse to be re-

claimed,

claimed, and, instead of regarding the ordinary means that have been used for that end, they did at first thrust out some ministers for contending with them in a way of church-union, and now, by an act and deed of their late pretended assembly, have done what in them lies, judicially to slay such as mint at witnessing-work; Whether or not, I say, in any of the above cases, our secession from them is not just and warrantable? And whether or not it is our duty to continue to contend for truth, and against present and former defections, in a way of secession from the present established judicatories? As this is the shape in which the question turns out from the narrative I give in my introduction, except what concerns the act and deed of the late assembly; so Mr. Currie has spent his time upon some trifling remarks, without ever noticing the question as stated above.——He never considers, that our secession is such as we have been gradually by the providence of God led unto, after a series of contending by the ordinary means against the sinful steps and proceedings of judicatories. But, instead of this, Mr. Currie makes a clamour and noise about some expressions in our protestation against the assembly 1733, wherein we express a very great regard for the judicatories of the church. And when I tell him, That the above protestation for our exoneration was one of the means we were then using of dealing with them for their repentance and reformation before the secession was stated; says he, Vind. p. 157. "Albeit it was before the secession, I hope they did not juggle nor dissemble with the judicatories of this church." I leave his indirect charge of juggling and dissimulation, amongst his other uncharitable heart-judgings. I shall only observe, that our dealing with them by the above mentioned protestation, as also by all the other means mentioned, was an evidence of our very great and sincere regard to them; I know no greater regard we can express to any judicatory under heaven, when they are carrying on a course of defection from the Lord, than to deal with them for their repentance and reformation: We dealt with them to reform, and after this manner testified our very great regard for them; yea, we dealt with them to reform, till, upon the matter, they said they would not reform, when they thrust some of us out in an arbitrary way and manner from their communion.——We owned also at that time their just power and authority; but, what is that power or authority that any church-judicatory has? It is a power for edification, and not for destruction.

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And tho' we have now, upon just and weighty grounds, found and declared, that the present judicatories are not lawful nor right-constitute courts of Christ, and consequently, while they continue in their backsliding course, are only pretended assemblies, synods, &c. yet I'll own at the same time to Mr. Currie that they have a power and authority to return to their duty, to set about reformation-work, to condemn their own sinful proceedings, and to exercise the keys of government and discipline for the glorious ends and purposes for which they are given by the exalted Head to the office-bearers of the church; and, if they would do so, our secession from them would soon be at an end, and we could, in a very great consistency with the testimonies we have given against them and their proceedings, embrace them as lawful and right-constitute courts of Christ: And therefore Mr. Currie, if he pleaseth, may spare the charge he lays against us, from our protestation, *anno 1773* of inconsistencies in our conduct, juggling and dissimulation.

After the narrative which I give in my introduction, I endeavour, in the first chapter of the Defence, to clear the state of the question; where I premise some observes concerning church communion. None of them are controverted by Mr. Currie, neither can he controvert them, unless he give up with our reformed and Presbyterian principles: And the reader may easily see, that if they are duly considered, and justly applied to the question before us, they will cut off some of Mr. Currie's wranglings about the state of the question, and also some of the grievous charges that he endeavours to fix upon our just and necessary secession. Only I must observe, That when I affirm in the close of my seventh observe, that the outward bond and ligament of our union and conjunction in this national church is, that system of pure and sound doctrine, that order of church government, worship and discipline, held forth from the word of God in our Confession of Faith, books of discipline, form of church-government, and directory for worship, in the profession and obedience of which all ranks of persons in this land are bound and obliged to abide by the national and solemn league and covenant: Upon this Mr. Currie accuses me of asserting that which is not matter of fact, and he asserts, That we are not obliged by these covenants to our Confession of Faith, form of church government, and directory for worship, tho' he owns we are bound to abide in these. But, why do not our covenants oblige us to abide in these? Because, says Mr. Currie, they were not

being when our covenants were framed. But, was not that them of pure and sound doctrine, that order of government, worship and discipline, held forth from the word of God in our Confession of Faith, &c. in being when our national covenant was framed? I affirm that our subordinate standards, they were composed by the Westminster assembly, contain in the matter the very same system of pure and sound doctrine, that order of government, worship and discipline, which had been received and embraced by the church of Scotland from her reformation, and which was sworn to in our national covenant; and, if Mr. Currie can shew the contrary, he may then accuse me of writing what is not matter of fact. Likewise, our Confession of Faith, Form of Church government, &c. are received and embraced, by the several acts of assembly adopting the same, as parts and branches of that uniformity sworn to in the Solemn League and Covenant: And Mr. Currie cannot refuse that the Confession of Faith, Form of Church government, and Directory for Worship, had been received by the church of Scotland before the Solemn League and Covenant was received *anno* 1649; therefore it is a very great mistake in Mr. Currie, to call it no worse, to accuse me in the above manner of asserting in this place what is not matter of fact.

In the 2d section of this first chapter of the Defence, I give several instances from his Essay, wherein I shew that the question is mis-stated by Mr. Currie. I shall in this place give two or three instances from his Vindication, to shew that he has not entered into the true state of the question, and that he continues to mis state the same.

I observe. Def. p. 39. That the author of the Essay mis-states the question, when he affirms, That violent intrusions were the chief ground of complaint in the year 1733, when their secession from the judicatories was first declared. Upon this Mr. Currie, Vind. p. 38. appeals to Mr. Erskine's synodical sermon, where he says, *The great thing complained of is the act of assembly 1732 anent the settling of ministers, and violent intrusions.* Granting it is true, that Mr. Erskine in his sermon chiefly complained of intrusions; does it therefore follow, that the brethren stated their secession mainly upon violent intrusions? But, says Mr. Currie, It is evident to a demonstration from what is said in their state of the process, 1738. where 'tis said, 'Violent intrusions are the main ground, at present, of Mr. Erskine's testimony, as well as of his

“brethren’s adherence unto him; as is plain from the text
 “in which both his protest and their adherence are concealed.” If the reader will believe Mr. Currie, his assertions are frequently self-evident, or evident to a demonstration and yet I can assure the reader, that there is no such thing asserted in the place of the state of the process above directed unto, viz. That violent intrusions were the chief ground of the complaint. As the words above quoted do plainly refer to the protest entered against the assembly 1733, so that protestation was expressly for liberty to testify against the act of assembly 1732, or the like defections, upon all proper occasions. And one may evidently see, that violent intrusions are one thing, and liberty to testify against these or the like defections is another thing. The chief thing that was complained of at that time by the said protest was, the shutting the mouths of ministers, by mere church authority, from testifying faithfully and freely against steps of defection. This is what the reasoning in the state of the process turns upon, one may see who compares the words above quoted with the preceding page. As Mr. Erskine in his synodical sermon testified particularly and expressly against the act 1732; so that gave the first rise to the act and sentence of the assembly 1733, whereby he was rebuked for impugning acts of assembly, and proceedings of church judicatories; and the above sentence of rebuke was the chief ground of the protestation that was entered, for liberty to testify against the act 1732 or the like defections. Likewise their protestation entered before the commission November 1733, wherein their secession is declared mentions the following grounds of the same, viz. That the judicatories were carrying on a course of defection from the reformed and covenanted principles, and particularly were suppressing ministerial freedom and faithfulness, in testifying against the present backslidings of this church, and inflicting censures upon ministers, for witnessing by protestations and otherwise against the same. Thus the reader may see from what is above, that the chief ground of complaint was not violent intrusions, and that our secession was never founded upon any one step of defection, considered abstractly and in itself; but upon a complex course of defection carried on with a high hand by the present judicatories: Hence, altho’ violent intrusions were justly complained of, yet the first and immediate point, upon which the secession was stated, was the suppressing of ministerial freedom as above: And therefore

will affirm, that it is a mis-stating of the question, when Mr. Currie asserts that violent intrusions were the chief ground of the complaint.

Mr. Currie goes on, *Vind. p. 39.* Then, says he, *never a word of professor Simson's damnable errors, never a sentence in all Mr. Erskine's synodical sermon anent them.* And after a quotation from a paper of mine, entitled, *A Discourse concerning some prevailing Evils of the Times*, from whence he alleges, the brethren could formerly make some apology for the church of Scotland as well as others; Mr. Currie adds, *But now the brethren have other designs to carry on; then their impressions as to the evil of professor Simson's errors were like other folks, &c.* Here again Mr. Currie runs out into his bitter and uncharitable heart judgings: He speaks, as if the concern we have expressed about doctrinal truths, did flow from a principle for carrying on our own designs. But I shall leave Mr. Currie to such railings as I find here and in the following page; only I must observe, that when he affirms, That then there was never a word of professor Simson's damnable errors, if he is not mocking at the concern the brethren profess for these, he is surely writing at random; for he cannot but know, that the affair of the doctrine was particularly noticed in the several contendings that were before our secession from the judicatories, as I have shown in the introduction to the Defence: And particularly, Mr. Currie cannot but know, that, when the process against the protesting ministers was upon the field, they did, in their representations given in to the commission August 1733, take particular notice of Mr. Simson's damnable errors, and of the conduct of the judicatories in that important matter. We did not at that time confine our testimony to violent intrusions, but did, upon the matter, take in what had been complained of in former instructions, representations and petitions: And in November thereafter the judicatories thrust us out from communion with them, with our above testimony against them in our hands. As for what he alleges, That there was never a sentence in all Mr. Erskine's synodical sermon against Mr. Simson's damnable errors; I shall only refer Mr. Currie to the first of the five last directions given in that excellent sermon, and he will see the contrary. As for Mr. Currie's propositions that are laid down in his Essay, second chapter, I can well refer my reader to what I have said, Defence, Chap. 1. Sect. 2. and he may compare what is said there with Mr. Currie's Vindication, Chap. 4.

Sect. 2. where the reader may see with his own eyes, that Mr. Currie has never taken off the force of what I have observed particularly upon the ambiguity of some of his propositions as also his perverting the state of the question. As for instance When he proves his fifth proposition from some of Mr. Shiel's words, Vind. p. 45. who says, "We may keep fellowship with a true church, tho' in many things faulty and corrupt" as all churches are in some measure in this militant state this is what I do not refuse. But Mr. Currie might have known, that the question upon the field betwixt him and me is, If this national church as she is represented in her present judicatories is a true church, as the terms are used in our reformed Confessions? Likewise, when he tells us in his fifth proposition, "That we are not to separate from a true church of Christ, tho' her faults and corruptions be many?" I grant him, Def. p. 45. that if, by faults and corruptions, meant personal defects and blemishes in the walk and practice of church members, that these are not ground of separation from a true church: But I add, "That if by faults and corruptions be meant dangerous errors or gross scandals, which a church refuseth to purge out, notwithstanding of warnings and admonitions given her; or defections and backslidings, carried on in her ecclesiastical capacity, from position of reformation once attained unto; then, I say, his above proposition is what we use to call a begging the question. Unto this Mr. Currie replies, Vind., p. 45. I say, *This is slander upon his mother church.* It seems we must take his word for sufficient proof. But these and the like confident assertions are nothing to Mr. Currie. He adds, Granting the truth of what is alledged, "In the church of Corinth there was a gross error and scandal; yet the apostle commanded to keep communion with that church, instead of injoining separation from her." Since Mr. Currie continues to me this one of his common-place arguments, I shall here note once for all, that I have proved, Def. p. 53. that the church of Corinth was a reforming church; and that she took heed to the apostolic warnings and admonitions given her. To which Mr. Currie replies, Vind. p. 57. "But then, how long was between his writing of his first and second epistles?" "uncertain, and how long before writing his first epistle the error had been among some in that church is also uncertain." But this is but mere shift and evasion: For whether the time was long or short, in any of the cases mentioned

the same thing to me, in regard that it stands good what I affirm, That the church of Corinth was in her ecclesiastical capacity a reforming church, upon the admonitions given her; and this Mr. Currie himself is obliged to acknowledge, when he says, *I grant it is not improbable these office bearers did discharge their duty with success.* Consequently there can be no argument drawn from the gross scandal and capital error that was found among some in that church, to continue in conjunction with such judicatories as refuse to be reformed, after the ordinary means have been used to reclaim them.

Before I proceed to give other instances of his mis-stating of the question, I must observe, that when I read the title of the 3d chapter of Mr. Currie's Essay, wherein he proposes to instance some things that are just ground for fasting, mourning and lamentation, yet are not sufficient causes of separation from a church; I expected that Mr. Currie would have made a free and faithful enumeration of some, at least, of the manifold grounds of mourning and lamentation in our present times; yet they are all past over by him in deep silence: Only, he calls the act of assembly 1732 a bad act, and makes some acknowledgement that there may be much ground to lament over a dead ministry in many places, Tho' the Lord Jesus has been blasphemed; tho' his supreme Deity, and the Deity of the Holy Ghost, has been impugned; tho' the operations of the holy Spirit have been ridiculed and burlesqued; tho' a scheme of dangerous errors, connected with an impudent denial of the federal headship of the first Adam, has been vented; and tho' this scheme has been maintained at the bar of our judicatories; and tho' the judicatories have not lifted up the standard of a particular and express testimony against the above gross abominations; and tho' they have never found that they deserved a place and room in causes of public fasting and humiliation; likewise, tho' the judicatories have lifted up their authority and power above the authority of the King of Zion, in the act 1732, and in the acts 1733 against the protesting ministers, and against the ministers of Dunfermline; though they have scattered and broken the heritage of God; and though all these are grounds of fasting, mourning and lamentation: Yet not one word of them in a chapter, wherein his professed design is, to instance some things that are ground for mourning and lamentation; only he calls (as I have observed) the act 1732 a bad act, yet he no where in that chapter reckons it a cause of mourning. Upon this says

Mr. Currie, Vind. p. 58. "If I reckoned it bad, it was as much as if I had said it was a cause of mourning; for I know nothing in a church which is bad or evil, but what is to be mourned over; and, says he, I know of no venial sins." Neither do I know of any venial sins more than he, but I know that some things may be bad in a church, because in some circumstantiated cases they may be inexpedient and not for edification, which yet are not in themselves absolutely sinful: And therefore, if Mr. Currie had dealt faithfully in the chapter wherein his professed design is to instance the grounds of fasting and humiliation, he ought plainly to have told his reader, that the said act was contrary to the authority of the King of Zion, and absolutely sinful in itself; and that the procedure of judicatories in the settlement of ministers to this very day, in the terms of the said act tho' now repealed, is a practical justifying of the same; and that both these were and are just grounds and causes for fasting, humiliation and mourning. Mr. Currie likewise tells his reader, That in the Essay, p. 30, 32. that is, in another chapter than this upon which my above observe is made, he acknowledges that there is ground to lament over the compliance of judicatories with patronages. What then? 'Tis not to be found amongst his instances of humiliation mentioned in his third chapter. Here was the place where he should have told Scotland's sins, and the sins of the church of Scotland, if he had answered the title he gives to his chapter: But the truth is, if he had dealt freely and faithfully upon this head, he would have been hard put to it, to have proven that the secession from the present judicatories is a schism or groundless separation; and therefore it was safest for him to wrap all up in some smooth generals, in the manner he has done in the chapter mentioned. I conclude my remarks upon his third chapter with observing, Def. p. 53. "That he gives vent to his invectives against our reforming period, particularly against the assembly 1638; as Essay, p. 20, 21." Unto which Mr. Currie replies, Vind. p. 58. "But, has he told what these invectives are? No; you must take his bare affirmation for truth: And who, says he, can think Mr. Wilson, who is so tender that he would not for a world sit in a judicatory of any such church as the church of Scotland, will speak any thing but what is truth?" I heartily pray that both Mr. Currie and I had more tenderness than any of us have: But the above sneering manner in which he delivers himself is no great evidence

evidence of any tenderness of spirit about him ; yea, to me 'tis an evidence of that levity of spirit that frequently discovers itself in his management of this subject. As for the above charge he brings against me, viz. That I would have my reader take my bare affirmation for truth ; the reader may see the injustice of it from my words above quoted, where I direct him to the pages of the Essay, where he will find how Mr. Currie treats the act of assembly 1638, which he frequently quotes as an unreasonable act, and more unreasonable than any since that time ; and tells his reader, " That some would say, that thereby that assembly looked upon themselves to be infallible in their decisions, and also, that they bind themselves to act by implicate faith." Is there no invective in all this?

Defence, Chap. 1. Sect. 3. I endeavour to declare the true state of the question betwixt the present judicatories and the associate presbytery, and I make several observes for clearing the same. I must leave it to the reader to compare them with Mr. Currie's Vindication, and let him judge for himself, if Mr. Currie has done justice to my observes as I have laid them. I shall only give two instances, wherein Mr. Currie either clouds or perverts the true state of the question.

The first instance I give is what contains matter of wonder to Mr. Currie ; and, because it contains something that he says he wonders at, therefore I shall briefly notice it : It is upon the third observe that I make for fixing the state of the question. And, because my words are seldom fully or fairly represented by Mr. Currie, I shall report them myself, and they stand thus, Def. p. 65. " It is one thing to depart from the communion of a church, and another thing to depart from communion with a party in that church, tho' the greatest number, who are carrying on a course of defection and backsliding : The seceding brethren have always refused, and they do upon good grounds refuse, that they have made any secession from the church of Scotland. If the church of Scotland is considered as her principles are held forth from the word of God in her Confession of Faith, Larger and Shorter Catechisms, Form of Church-government, Directory for Worship, and other laudable acts and constitutions of this national church, the seceding ministers have openly declared and acknowledged their adherence to all these, in their judicial act and testimony ; or, if her principles are considered as they are solemnly avouched and sworn to in the national covenant of Scotland, and the So-

"lemn League and covenant of the three nations, they have
 "also in like manner, in their foresaid Act and Testimony
 "acknowledged the inviolable obligation of these solemn oaths
 "and covenants: But, if the church of Scotland is considered
 "as represented in her present judicatories, they own that
 "they have declared a secession from them, and that they can
 "not now act in conjunction with them, as members of the
 "same ecclesiastical body; and that because they are carrying
 "on a course of defection and backsliding from our covenanted
 "uniformity, in doctrine, worship, government and discipline,
 "notwithstanding of many representations and remonstrances
 "made before them unto the contrary. There fore the question
 "under our consideration is not concerning secession from the
 "church of Scotland, but concerning secession from the present
 "judicatories of this national church. I think my above words
 "do fully explain themselves; yet Mr Currie thinks fit to make
 "the following reflection upon them Vind. p. 71. "I could never
 "but wonder what the brethren mean by refusing that they
 "had separated from the church of Scotland; but, when come
 "to the 65th page of his Defence, he tells, that by the church
 "of Scotland they mean her principles contain'd in the Confession
 "of Faith, &c. and other laudable acts and constitutions of
 "this national church, and they refuse that they have made
 "a secession from these, &c. I shall pass Mr. Currie's charge,
 "that our manner of stating the question as above is far from
 "plain dealing; and that some say, It deserves no other name
 "than gross dissimulation, p. 72. 'Tis unpleasant to me to
 "rake into his frequent charges and insinuations, which
 "favour so much of a bitter and an uncharitable spirit. I
 "shall only notice the reason he gives why he wonders at
 "what is contain'd in my above manner of stating the question,
 "as it stands in his Vind. p. 71. at the foot: Says he, "Can
 "she be a Presbyterian church without judicatories? Who could
 "speak of this without a smile? to tell people, The doctrine
 "maintain'd in the Confession of Faith is the church of Scotland.
 "If so, then she is a pure church indeed." As for his above
 "query, which no doubt Mr. Currie reckons a very pungent one,
 "I ask him again, Where was the Presbyterian church of Scotland,
 "when for several years after 1661 she had neither assemblies,
 "synods, presbyteries nor sessions? I hope she was not
 "extinguished during that period; nay, the Lord preserved her:

And all such

such who in any corner of the land adhered unto, and in their
 sphere witnessed for, the covenanted principles of this church,
 were the Presbyterian church of Scotland. I shall leave Mr.
 Currie to his laugh, or smile, when I have told him, That,
 for my part, I judge it matter of mourning, when I see one of
 his profession and character diverting himself after this man-
 ner upon such a grave subject; when he says' "To tell peo-
 ple the doctrine maintained in the Confession of Faith, &c,
 "is the church of Scotland." I ask, Who is it that tells people
 this? In my above observe I speak not of principles and doctrines
 abstractly, but of the principles of the church of Scotland
 held forth from the word of God, &c. and as they are so-
 lemnly avouched and sworn to in our national covenant. When
 I speak of the principles of a church, and of principles av-
 vouched and sworn unto, do not the words plainly import
 that such doctrines and principles have been own'd and con-
 fessed by a body of people in our land, yea, by the body of
 the people in this land? And, if it will satisfy Mr. Currie's
 wonder, he may go to our reformed divines who have treat-
 ed upon the subject of secession, and he may learn from them
 the meaning of the terms as they are laid in my above observe
 concerning the state of the question: Thus they express
 themselves; "We refuse that we have separated from the an-
 "tient apostolic church of Rome, but our separation is from
 "the present corrupted and degenerate church of Rome, as
Turret. de necessaria Secessione, Disput. prima, Sect. 26. and
Voet. de desperata causa Papatus, Lib. 3. Sect. tertia, Cap. 10.
 And tho' Mr. Currie should wonder, laugh or smile at it, I
 must tell him, that our secession is not from the primitive re-
 forming and covenanting church of Scotland, but from the
 present backsliding judicatories. 'Tis like, Mr. Currie will
 now I cry out, that put the church of Scotland upon the same
 footing with the church of Rome, as he does very unjustly,
Vind. p. 29. upon a comparison for illustration, which I make,
Def. p. 20. but I hope no fair reasoner will alledge, that com-
 parisons of, this kind put things or persons compared upon
 the same footing. I shall only further observe upon this head,
 That when Mr. Currie, or some others for him, affirm, *Vind.*
p. 80. "That the constitution of a church, together with
 "her principles, is not the church;" I cannot conceive what
 metaphysical idea or notion Mr. Currie or his learned assist-
 ants have formed to themselves of the term, *principles of a*
church: For my part, when I speak of the *principles of a*
church,

church, I cannot form to myself any other notion of the expression, than a company of men and women associate together, who have either own'd or are owning and confessing *such principles*.

I shall only give another instance of Mr. Currie's perverting the state of the question, and it is, his affirming that our present secession, and erect ourselves into a presbytery, is a setting up a Presbyterian church within a Presbyterian church Vind. p. p. 13, 74. This I likewise call a perverting the state of the question; and my reason for it is, that this national church, tho' she bears the Presbyterian name, and has the outward form and shadow of Presbyterian government yet she is exercising a lordly and magisterial power over the heritage of God, she is ruling the flock of Christ with rigor, and perverting the keys of government and discipline; and therefore tho' she has the Presbyterian name, yet she has not the thing itself, and her government is not a whit better than if its form and model were Prelatical. And if Mr. Currie can bear it without charging me with setting his established church upon an equal footing with Rome and England; I shall give him another comparison for the illustration of this subject, *viz.* The secession of the Protestants from the church of Rome was never reckoned a rearing up of a Christian church within a Christian church, but only the departure of such who desired to cleave to the pure and primitive institutions of Christianity, from the majority of an ecclesiastical body, who, under the Christian name and profession, had overthrown and subverted, in innumerable instances, the pure doctrines and institutions of Christianity. In like manner, the secession of Protestant dissenters from the church of England is not a rearing up of a Protestant church within a Protestant church, but a departure from the majority of that ecclesiastical body, who, under the Protestant name and profession, retain many of the abominations of Rome, both in her worship, government and discipline, and who refuse to reform. Even so, our secession from the present established church of Scotland, is not an erecting a Presbyterian church within a Presbyterian church, but a departure from ecclesiastical communion with an ecclesiastical body, who refuse, in their ecclesiastical capacity, to make a public judicial confession of many important and weighty truths, held forth from the word of God in our Confession of Faith, in opposition unto the open and manifest injuries that have been done to the same; and who are, in many particular

instances, subverting our Presbyterian order and government. Tho' Mr. Currie alledges, " That the brethren do not understand their own principles," and " that they have no fixed principle upon this head," or, " that they clash with one another upon this head," Vind. p. 72. yet I hope, from what I have observed, the reader will see that the brethren are consistent with themselves, with one another, and with the truth itself, when they affirm, that they have made a secession from the present judicatories, but not from the church of Scotland.

I shall conclude this chapter when I have observed, that our present secession from the judicatories is not a secession from the Christian, catholic, visible church; this is our New-Testament mount Zion, unto which a gospel-ministry and gospel ordinances are primarily given, 1 Cor. xii. 28. But our secession is a departure from a corrupt part of the catholic visible body, upon the account of their defections and backslidings continued in, and from which they refuse to reform, tho' the proper means have been used to reclaim them. This observation leans to the first of my four general observations upon church-communion, Def. chap. 1. sect. 1. And, if this were duly noticed, it answers all the arguments that Mr. Currie brings against our secession, from the practice of the prophets under the Old Testament, and from the practice of Christ and his apostles as the same is recorded by the evangelists, as I have more fully evinced, Def. chap. 3. Sect. 1. Again, our secession is not a departure from any of the Protestant churches, in so far as they maintain the Protestant testimony against Rome Antichristian; but it is a departure from ecclesiastical union and conjunction with judicatories, who have, in many particular instances, departed from the Protestant reformed testimony, as the same was lifted up in Scotland, in her reforming and covenanting times; according to my seventh observe in the above quoted section. Likewise, our present secession is not a departure from the principles of the church of Scotland, as they have been confessed, acknowledged, and sworn unto, by this whole church and land; but it is a departure from ecclesiastical union and conjunction with the present judicatories, who not only refuse to confess and acknowledge many of the above principles, in opposition to the contradiction they have met with; but who likewise, in many particular instances, walk contrary to them. And in the last place, to use some of Mr. Sheills's words in his Treatise, on church-communion, p. 15, 23, 24. Our present secession

secession is not a departure from union and conjunction with such judicatories as are promoting reformation in doctrine, worship, discipline and government, and opposing Popery, Prelacy, Erastianism, Sectarianism, and whatsoever is contrary to sound doctrine and the power of godliness, according to the word of God, our Confession of Faith and covenants; nay, in all our proceedings we plead for union and conjunction with such: But our secession is a departure from judicatories, who, instead of promoting, are bearing down a judicial Testimony to many important truths, and who are exercising a lordly dominion over the flock and heritage of God, and who are giving up the rights and privileges of Christ's kingdom unto Erastian usurpations upon the same, and who, instead of returning to the Lord, and to our reformation standards and testimony agreeable to the word of God, do persecute and cast out of their synagogues such as desire to confess our reformed principles, and in their stations to adhere to the same, according to the rules laid down in the holy scripture, and the solemn covenant engagements that this whole church and land are under to the most high God. But this leads me to



C H A P. III.

Wherein it is shewn, that Mr. Currie has not entred into the Argument, as it is stated in the Defence, for Secession from the present Judicatories.

THE argument as I have laid it, for secession from the present judicatories, runs in the following manner: When the majority of a particular visible church do, in their ecclesiastical or judicative capacity, go on in a course of defection from reformation-purity once attained unto, and will not be reformed, after the ordinary means have been used to reclaim them; then, and in this case, the minor part, tho' but very few in number, who desire to be found faithful unto the Lord, may, yea, ought to depart from church communion with the backsliding part; and such as are office-bearers among them may warrantably exercise the keys of discipline and government, in a *distinct capacity* from the majority,

majority, who are the *backsliding part*, for these ends and purposes for which they are given unto the church by her glorious and exalted Head: But the majority of this particular visible church are going on in a course of defection in the manner above-mentioned; therefore such as desire to be found faithful to the Lord, and to hold fast the purity once attained unto, may and ought, tho' the minor part by far, to depart from church-communion with the *backsliding part*; and such as are office-bearers amongst them may warrantably exercise the keys of government and discipline in the manner likewise above-mentioned.

The first proposition in the above argument lies in express terms in the preface to the Defence, p. 7. Mr. Currie, in his pretended answers to my preface, passeth over this proposition. I tell my reader, in the place quoted, That it is a principle upon which my reasonings for secession from the present judicatories are founded; and that it is a reformation-principle, or a principle upon which the reformed churches set out, and carried on reformation-work. Since Mr. Currie does not call the truth of this principle in question, I may take for granted, that he acknowledges it. As for the second proposition in my above argument, *viz.* That this particular visible church, in her ecclesiastical or judicative capacity, is going on in a course of defection from reformation-purity once attained unto, and that she will not be reformed, tho' the ordinary means have been used to reclaim her; yea, I may add, she justifies herself in her iniquities, and prosecutes and persecutes such as endeavour to witness against her defections: Mr. Currie cannot refuse, that the ordinary means have been used with the judicatories to reclaim them, and that we have dealt with them by petitions, representations and remonstrances, until they thrust some of us out from their communion; but Mr. Currie refuseth that the judicatories are going on in a course of defection, he purgeth them of what he calls positive backsliding, Vind. p. 32. and from going on in a course of defection, Vind. p. 74. The only exception he makes is violent intrusions; and how he is consistent with himself in this, the reader may see from what I have observed in the former section. He charges me with slander on my mother-church, when I speak of defections and backslidings carried on in her ecclesiastical capacity, Vind. p. 45. I heartily wish there had been no ground for such a charge; but both Mr. Currie and we have ground to fear, that this whole church and land may
feel

feel the weight of that awful word of the Lord, Jer. ii. 3. *Yet thou sayest, Because I am innocent, surely his anger shall turn from me: Behold, I will plead with thee, because thou sayest, I have not sinned.* I endeavour to prove, Def. chap. that the present judicatories are guilty of carrying on a course of defection from our covenanted doctrine, order and government agreeable to the word of God; and that this national church, as she is represented in them, has not a just claim to the characters of a true church, as they are laid in our first and other reformed Confessions. I shall then briefly give a few instances, to shew that Mr. Currie has not entered into the argument as I have laid it; and, for the reader's ease, shall distinguish this chapter into the following sections.

S E C T. I.

Some instances, shewing that Mr. Currie has not entered into the Argument for Secession, as it is stated upon the Head of Doctrine.

IN the 1st section of the 2d chapter of the Defence, I endeavour to prove, that this church, as she is represented in her present judicatories, has not the scripture character of the church of the *living God*, 1 Tim. iii. 15. Mr. Currie is at pains to give us the Popish and other commentaries upon these words, *the pillar and ground of truth*; but he does not, neither can he reasonably, controvert the ordinary and orthodox Protestant commentary that I give upon them. My argument upon this head leans to my sixth general observe upon church communion, Def. p. 36. viz. “The public profession and confession of the truths of God, is one of the peculiar characteristics of the church of the *living God*; she is designated the *pillar and ground of truth*, 1 Tim. iii. 15. that is, “The church is a public witness unto the truth, a public keeper and notifier of the truth.” Hence I observe, that the church ought to bear testimony and witness in a particular and express manner to these truths that are controverted and opposed, and the testimony ought to be in direct and express opposition unto the terms by which truth is subverted; this is a debt that Zion owes to her God, to make a public confession of his truths, Psal. cxlvii. 12. And my argument proceeds in the following manner: Every particular visible church, which would evidence herself to be the church of the

ing God, ought to support, maintain and uphold the truth
 against all such errors as may spring up in that church, where-
 the truth may be anywise prejudiced; she ought to publish,
 declare and confess the truth in such particular and distinct
 terms, as every one may understand the mind and will of the
 Lord and Head of the church; when error is vented, she ought
 to give a certain and distinct sound, that it may be known
 what is truth, and what is error: But the present judicatories
 of this national church have obstinately refused to publish and
 confess the truth, in the manner mentioned, in opposition to
 the many gross and pernicious errors that have been vented a-
 mongst us, and which have been brought to the bar of the
 judicatories; therefore this national church, as she is repre-
 sented in her present judicatories, has not the scripture cha-
 racter of the church of the *living God*; or, she is not a true
 church, in the sense of our reformed Confessions. The first
 proposition of the above argument I prove from the scriptures
 before quoted; as also from the charge that is given, and the
 trust that is committed, to the office bearers of the church,
 Acts xx. 28, 29. 2 Tim. i. 13, 14. I likewise argue from these
 scriptures, That it is one of the primary ends and designs of
 the erection and constitution of a visible church in this world,
 that the Lord Jesus may be honoured and glorified, by a *par-
 ticular, open and express confession* of his name and truths;
 and that the communion of the members of every particular
 visible church amongst themselves, is built upon their com-
 mon or joint profession and confession of the same truths.

As for the 2d proposition in my above argument, That this
 national church, as represented in her present judicatories,
 does not publish and confess the truth, in opposition to the
 many dangerous errors which have been vented amongst us;
 it is evident to me from her conduct and behaviour with re-
 spect to the several gross errors that have been before the bar
 of her judicatories; in regard the erroneous have maintained
 and defended their gross and corrupt doctrines, as truths a-
 greeable to the word of God, and our Confession of Faith:
 and they have not only been dismissed from the bar, either
 with no censure at all, or without any censure proportioned to
 the scandal they have given; but also, the judicatories have
 never particularly and expressly condemned their errors, as con-
 trary to the word of God, and our Confession of Faith. The
 first instance I give, Def. p. 77. is in Mr. Simson's first libel:
 and, after I have given a particular detail of some of the per-
 nicious

noxious doctrines maintained by Mr. Simson in his answers to the said libel, I observe, That the author of the Essay will be hard put to it, to prove that they are not everlive of the foundation. I also observe, That however light some may make them, yet, if they are seriously considered, it will plainly appear, that the whole system of divine truth, held forth from the word of God in our Confession of Faith, is subverted by them; and that it may be too justly said that this church leavened by the foresaid doctrines, seeing these dangerous errors have been brought to the bar of our assemblies once and again, and yet the standard of a plain and particular testimony has never been lifted up against them. Thus my argument is laid in the Defence, from p. 76. to 89. and I might leave it to the unbiassed reader, to look into Mr. Currie's Vindication, and to compare it with the Defence; and he will see with his own eyes, that Mr. Currie has never once entred into the argument but every where shifts the same: And, to satisfy the reader, I shall give a few instances for proof of what I have just now said.

The first instance I give is, Vind. p. 85. where Mr. Currie tells his reader, "That the assembly 1717. (as Mr. Wilkin owns, Def. p. 22.) discharged Mr. Simson to vent or teach these propositions, which were esteemed to be erroneous which (says Mr. Currie) all the world must own was a condemning them in general, and interpretatively a condemning every one of them in particular." To which I reply That I own no such thing as Mr. Currie reports; who, after his usual manner, quotes my words unfairly, and tells not the one half of what I say in the place of my Defence above quoted, where I tell my reader, that, in the year 1726, "There was a flagrant report, that Mr. Simson continued to teach the same dangerous errors for which he had formerly been under process, and which the assembly 1717 had discharged him to vent and teach." In the above words I speak of the report concerning Mr. Simson, as it was spread at that time; and in my words immediately following, which Mr. Currie conceals; I deliver my own judgment, where I add, "Tho', in the act of the said assembly, the prohibition is laid in very general terms; and none of his dangerous propositions, which were owned and maintained by himself in his answers to the libel exhibited against him, are either particularly condescended upon, or expressly condemned." This is what I own and assert, and which Mr. Currie does not make answer unto. And the truth is, the prohibition is laid

in such general terms, that no body can know what the particular propositions are, which, it is alledged, tend to attribute too much to natural reason, and the power of corrupt nature; and therefore this is far from being a plain confessing the truths of God, in opposition unto the injury that was done them by Mr. Simson in the answers to his libel. Mr. Currie adds, That "that assembly expressly condemned Mr. Simson, as having used expressions which tended to attribute too much to natural reason, and the power of corrupt nature; which undue advancing of reason and nature (says that assembly) is always to the disparagement of revelation and efficacious free grace: Which (says Mr. Currie) was a plain condemning of his errors, and a testimony to the truth, particularly to the doctrine of free grace, against the Arminians." But this was far from being a plain condemning of Mr. Simson's errors, for the reason already given. It was likewise far from being a testimony against the Arminians; for if we huddle up matters in general with them, and if we do not enter into their particular propositions, they will join with the assembly in condemning such who attribute too much to natural reason, or to the power of corrupt nature. I beg leave to add one observation further upon this head, and it is this; I do not find that the assembly 1717 have condemned Mr. Simson in the manner above-mentioned by Mr. Currie: The act of the said assembly runs in the following terms, "Therefore, altho' professor Simson does declare his adherence to our Confession of Faith, and the doctrines contained therein, as his judgment, and disowns the errors opposite thereto, wherewith he was charged; yet, considering, that by his printed answers, &c. he hath given offence, and that it is judged that therein he hath vented some opinions not necessary to be taught in divinity. — And, for answering more satisfyingly (as he supposeth) the cavils and objections of adversaries, he hath adopted some hypotheses different from what are commonly used among orthodox divines, that are not evidently founded on scripture, and tend to attribute too much to natural reason, and the power of corrupt nature, &c." Now, what has the assembly said? They have even said, 'Tis judged that Mr. Simson has done so and so; and, no doubt, some, yea many, did judge that Mr. Simson had vented himself in the above manner: But the assembly have never said, That they themselves have either judged or found that Mr. Simson

hath adopted the hypotheses mentioned. The assembly's manner of dealing in such important and weighty truths were at that time impugned or denied, *viz.* by a general prohibition, and by such an ambiguous judgment, left the truths that were opposed lying wounded and bleeding in our street without any suitable testimony unto them.

Further likewise, in my above argument, I observe, That Mr. Simson's dangerous errors were brought to the bar of our assemblies once and again, first in the year 1715, &c. and afterward in the years 1727, &c. and that when the same pernicious and dangerous scheme of error was brought the second time to the bar of the judicatories, and when the assembly's committee had found that Mr. Simson continued to teach gross errors; Is there any testimony given at that time to injured truth? Have the judicatories, either at that time, or any time since, found, that the truths of God, plainly held forth from the word of God, in our Confession of Faith were subverted by the foresaid scheme? Does Mr. Currie, in his Vindication, make any reply to this? Nay, he slips it over. And the conduct of the judicatories was yet more culpable when it is considered, that Mr. Simson, in his objections against, and answers unto, the second libel that was exhibited against him by the assembly's committee 1727, pleads in his own defence, That the propositions contained in the said libel, and which were taken out of his own printed Defence were none of them found by the assembly 1717 to be contrary to the word of God and our Confession of Faith. And as I humbly judge, from what I have observed above, he has no ground for this plea; so, when the assembly dismissed his errors at that time from their bar, without any manner of testimony against them, it is evident and plain, that this national church, as she is represented in her present judicatories is not a confessing church; that she is not the pillar and ground of truth; and that she refuseth to give a certain and distinct sound, whereby the members of the church may know what is truth, and what is error. It is but a mere evasion, which Mr. Currie tells his reader, Vind. p. 94. "I suppose (says he) the reason why our assembly have passed errors the more easily is, Because they saw it would not be easy to overturn the whole of such or such processes in the time of an assembly." Observe, reader, that Mr. Currie, for once, acknowledges what is truth, *viz.* That errors have been passed more easily by our general assemblies. It is matter of regret, that they have been

easily passed. As for the reason assigned by Mr. Currie,
 viz. Because of the shortness of the time of their meeting;
 Mr. Currie knows very well, that the general assembly 1720
 did, in two meetings of that assembly, and after a meeting of
 a committee of the whole house, excerpt out of the book cal-
 led the *Marrow of Modern Divinity*, and condemn instantly,
 as erroneous, a greater number of propositions than these that
 are contained either in Mr. Simson's or Campbell's processes:
 But I humbly judge that I have given the true reason, in De-
 fence, p. 81. why Mr. Simson and Mr. Campbell's errors
 were more easily passed; and it is this: "When an act, as-
 sertory of the truth, has been demanded, does not our au-
 thor very well know, that it has been argued in open court,
 That we were not to add new articles to our Confession of
 Faith? And what could we mean by such pleadings, but
 that our Confession does not determine particularly and ex-
 pressly, in opposition to many of the gross and hainous errors
 that have been vented?" This I offer in reply to Mr. Currie's
 magisterial assertion, (Essay, p. 2.) "That it is unaccounta-
 ble to charge the church of Scotland as favourers of Mr.
 Simson's errors." And Mr. Currie, tho' he endeavours to
 defend his above assertion, yet he never attempts to take off
 the force of my above reply. And Mr. Currie might have
 known that this was the true reason why errors were more
 easily passed by our judicatories, viz. It was alledged, That,
 if Mr. Simson's erroneous propositions had been particularly
 and expressly condemned, we would thereby add new articles
 to our Confession of Faith; as if the said errors had not been
 contrary to the doctrine delivered in our Confession of Faith:
 And therefore every one is left to construct as they please con-
 cerning the errors vented by Masters Simson and Campbell,
 whether they are agreeable to our Confession of Faith or not.
 The most that can be said of them, according to this way of
 reasoning is, That they are doubtful propositions, about which
 our Confession of Faith does not particularly or plainly de-
 termine; which is in effect to betray and give up into the
 hands of our adversaries some necessary and important truths
 plainly contained in our Confession. Mr. Currie's leading ar-
 gument against what I advance upon the head of doctrine is,
 That we have a pure Confession of Faith; consequently, that
 our standards of doctrine are pure; and, that all the ministers
 of this church, and all such as are licensed as probationers
 for the holy ministry, are obliged to sign our Confession of
 Faith:

Faith: And therefore he concludes, that the present judicatories, in their ecclesiastical capacity, maintain the true doctrine, and profess the true faith. But to this I reply, Def. p. 78. "Tho' the standards of a church for doctrine were never so pure or perfect, yet, when error is brought to her bar and not condemned, she is justly charged with tolerating and allowing error." I add, "It is evident, that tho' the standards of a church may be pure, yet, if error is brought to the bar of her judicatories, and maintained as agreeable to her standards, and the church says nothing to the contrary; that every one who adopt such dangerous principles, may reasonably judge in themselves, that the church does not reckon the errors they espouse to be contrary to her public standards. And this was the case with Mr. Simson; he maintained, That the several propositions that were owned and acknowledged by him, tho' of the above dangerous nature and tendency, were agreeable to the word of God, and no-wise contrary to our Confession of Faith. Hence it is plain, that, with respect to the errors asserted and maintained by Mr. Simson in his first process, our Confession of Faith can no more be reckoned a fixed standard and test of orthodoxy and soundness in the faith, in opposition to the said errors, either in the judicatories of the church, or amongst such as are in conjunction with them; in regard the present judicatories have refused a Confession of their Faith, in opposition to the above pernicious errors, maintained at their bar as agreeable to the word of God, and no-wise contrary to our said Confession of Faith; and consequently, they must be held as a leavened lump, until the above mentioned and other errors are particularly and expressly condemned." The evidence that is in my above reasonings appears to me to be as clear as two and three make five: But, however evident my above reasonings are, Mr. Currie's only reply to them, Vind. p. 86. is, "That, if a church command all her ministers and members to guard against teaching or preaching such positions as are erroneous, that says very much against such errors; and this, says he, as hath been shown just now, was the case with respect to the professor's first libel, when it came before the assembly 1717." But I have shown just now, that, by the general prohibition that was given Mr. Simson, none of his errors were particularly condemned; and likewise this general prohibition did not, yea, could not, point out to the minister

members of this church, such erroneous propositions as were maintained by Mr. Simson, and which it was their duty to guard against. Mr. Currie adds, That "the present judicatories profess their adherence to our standards in their true and genuine meaning, as much as the brethren or any else can do." I answer, The brethren, in their judicial act and testimony, have found and declared many propositions, in the express terms in which they are laid by Mr. Simson in his defences, and by Mr. Campbell in his writings, to be contrary to the word of God and our Confession of Faith; and they have condemned them as such: And likewise, they have asserted the truth, in direct opposition to the terms in which the above erroneous propositions are expressed. But this the present judicatories have never done; yea, tho' they have been dealt with for this effect, yet they have obstinately refused to do it; Therefore the present judicatories are very far from professing their adherence to our Confession of Faith in its true and genuine meaning, as the seceding brethren have done; nay, from their conduct and management in the doctrinal errors that have been brought unto their bar, the members of this church can never understand or know what the judicatories reckon to be the true and genuine sense and meaning of our Confession of Faith in such weighty and important points.

Mr. Currie, in his reasonings upon the head of doctrine, repeats over and over again what he had said in his Essay, without ever considering the answers I have given him in the Defence; as the reader may see, if he pleases to compare my Defence and his Vindication together. I shall only take notice of one thing that Mr. Currie insists upon, and it is this, When I affirm in my Defence, That Masters Simson and Campbell maintained the several propositions owned and acknowledged by them in their writings, tho' of a dangerous nature and tendency, as agreeable to the word of God, and no wise contrary to our Confession of Faith; (and this, I think, every one who understands the controversy with the fore said persons, and who is not under the power of prejudice, will readily acknowledge; yet) Mr. Currie pleads, in his Essay, p. 115 That *Mr. Simson declared his adherence to our Confession of Faith, and doctrines therein contained, and disowned the errors opposite thereto wherewith he was charged.* And, p. 121. That *neither Mr. Simson nor Mr. Campbell offered to defend the erroneous propositions as libelled, or in the sense alledged against them.* And he speaks to the same purpose, in his Vind. p.

93. And, when I tell my reader, Def. p. 23. That Mr. Simson never acknowledged that he had taught any thing contrary to the word of God or our Confession of Faith; Mr. Currie or some others for him, Vind. p. 87. gives me the following answer, *His meaning was not, that his expressions, in the sense put upon them, were not contrary to the word of God and our Confession; but that the sense he had of them was agreeable to both, even when taken in the true and plain sense which we put upon them.* If the above words have any significance or meaning, it must be this, That erroneous propositions were libelled against Mr. Simson: And tho' these propositions were errors when taken in the sense libelled, and tho' the said propositions were libelled in the ordinary sense and meaning that men put upon words; yet Mr. Simson was not found erroneous: Why? Because he had an orthodox sense and meaning of erroneous propositions, when taken in the true and plain sense that men put upon words. I confess, the above assertion of Mr. Currie or his learned friends is above my comprehension, and appears to me to be as inconsistent and self-contradictory as the doctrine of the Papists, who teach that the holy scriptures have a double and contrary sense and meaning. Truth will still be truth, and error will still be error, while the world stands, whatever sense or meaning men may pretend to give of an erroneous proposition. And to tell the world, that a proposition, which, in the common sense that men put upon words, is erroneous, may likewise be truth, is to impose upon the world, and has a native tendency to introduce scepticism in religion, and consequently atheism itself. To illustrate this matter a little, I shall mention one of Mr. Simson's propositions, and it lies in his first letter to the presbytery of Glasgow. Upon a report, that he had said, when he read Pictet to his students upon these words, *Christus est summus Deus*, that the words are to be understood *cum grandis latitudine*; the professor's reply to the above report is, "Tho' I do not remember I then used this expression, yet I think 'tis probable I might, because I often use it on the like occasions, namely, when a term is not to be taken in the greatest latitude wherein 'tis used by some authors." That is, The title of the *most high God* is not applicable to the Son, when the terms are taken in the greatest latitude wherein they are used by some authors. Do not then the professor's above words, when taken in the common sense and meaning that men put upon words, derogate from the true Deity and essential

essential glory of the Son of God? But, according to Mr. Currie's above reasoning, the sense which the professor had of them was agreeable to the word of God and our Confession, even when taken in the true and plain sense which we put upon them. Mr. Currie might as well have said, that both sides of a contradiction are true: For, even when the professor pretends to explain his above expressions, he justifies, in the same letter, his leading fallacy, whereby he confounds the essential perfections of God with the personal properties of the three adorable persons of the Godhead; whereby the true Deity of the Son and Holy Ghost is subverted. And, as I observe, Def. p. 89. Mr. Simson in all his declarations before the assembly, and even in his speech mentioned Vind. p. 90. did not make the least acknowledgement that ever he had taught any thing contrary to the word of God and our Confession; tho', to use Mr. Currie's words, it is as plain as two and three make five, that he had, in his foresaid letter, subverted the doctrine of the holy Trinity, as it is laid down from the word of God in our Confession of Faith. Mr. Currie, in the above places of his Essay and Vindication, has purged Masters Simson and Campbell of error; he has found them to be orthodox and sound: For, according to Mr. Currie, as above, "The sense he had of the propositions libelled against him" (*viz.* Mr. Simson) was agreeable to the word of God and "our Confession, even when the expressions were taken in "the true and plain sense which we put upon them." Yet he tells us, Vind. p. 85. That the assembly 1717 condemned Mr. Simson's errors; and, p. 94. That errors had been more easily past, because such processes could not be overtaken in the time of an assembly. I must own, that I have not read more inconsistent and self-contradictory reasonings. Mr. Currie wishes, that there had been an act assertory of the truth, and a warning against errors; for my part, I know not to what purpose in the cases mentioned. Surely, when Masters Campbell and Simson are orthodox and sound, when none of them defend their erroneous propositions in the sense alledged against them, and when they both explained their propositions into a sound sense and meaning) there was no need of such an assertory act or warning: All that was needful to be done is, an act assertory of their innocency and freedom from error; and this is what the judicatories have indeed upon the matter done.

Upon Mr. Currie's affirming that Masters Simson and Campbell did not offer to defend their erroneous propositions in the sense alledged against them, I make the following observation Def. p. 92. and I shall report it in my own words, because they are never fairly nor fully reported by Mr. Currie. My words are, "I hope it will be allowed that a sense and meaning, opposed to our received and approved principles, was the sense in which Masters Simson's and Campbell's propositions were libelled against them; and 'tis very evident that they have all along defended their opinions in a sense directly opposite to the received principles of the church of Scotland: Therefore, whatever art they have used now and then in colouring their errors with sly distinctions, yet it must be owned by all who understand their scheme, that they have defended their erroneous positions as libelled, or in the sense alledged against them: And, if our author refuse this, let him give an instance of such erroneous positions as Masters Simson and Campbell have explained into a sound sense, and such as he will venture his own character upon, that they are sound and orthodox; and, until he do this, I must either hold him as giving up the question as he himself has stated it upon the head of doctrine, or that he has not understood their principles." Unto this Mr. Currie makes the following reply, Vind. p. 96. "As to Mr. Wilson's demand of instances, I might more justly require instances of their defending these errors, pleading, before our judicatories, that they were truths, and not errors. For it is a received maxim, *Affirmanti incumbit probatio*: And, until he adduce sufficient proof that they defended such erroneous opinions in a sense opposite to the received principles of this church, Mr. Wilson may be esteemed guilty of slander, not only these professors, but also the church of Scotland." And after Mr. Currie has made some trifling diversions from the argument, which I do not think worth while to notice, he adds, "After all, I might venture my character upon it, that professor Simson disown'd the errors opposite to our Confession of Faith wherewith he was charged, and disown'd the unsound sense put upon his expressions by adversaries, &c." Since Mr. Currie has demanded of me instances that Masters Simson and Campbell have defended their errors, and pled before the judicatories that they were truths, and not errors; I shall not dispute it with him, to which of us the proof belongs. And therefore I accept of

the challenge he gives me; and, in return to his demand, I affirm, That the several erroneous propositions which are condemned by the associate presbytery in their Act and Testimony, from p. 49. to 55. ly, in express terms, in Mr. Simson's answers to Mr. Webster's libel; and tho' they are gross errors, yet they are maintained and defended by him, in the said answers, as if they were divine truths agreeable to the word of God and our Confession. And, if Mr. Currie would be satisfied in this, let him go and learn from the committee of the general assembly that met *anno* 1727, and they will teach him, as to several of Mr. Simson's propositions condemned by the associate presbytery, that they were nowise agreeable to the word of God, or our Confession of Faith: And I affirm, as to all of the propositions condemned by the said presbytery, that they are gross errors, subversive of that scheme of doctrine held forth from the word of God in our Confession; and yet they have never been particularly nor expressly condemned by the judicatories of this established church; whereby the edge of divine truth, as it is held forth from the word of God in our Confession, has never been laid against these pernicious errors.

With respect to Mr. Campbell, I affirm in like manner, That his several propositions condemned by the associate presbytery, from p. 59, to 75. were maintained and defended by him, in his books and writings, as truths, agreeable to the word of God and our Confession; and that the said presbytery have, upon the weighty grounds and reasons mentioned in their act, found them to be contrary to the word of God, and Confession of Faith. I mention some of Mr. Campbell's propositions, Def. p. 80. where I desire Mr. Currie to try if he can reconcile them with what he himself acknowledges to be a fundamental truth, *viz.* That our justification is only by the surety's imputed righteousness. To which he replies, Vind. p. 88. *I never offered to vindicate any of Mr. Campbell's positions, more than did the brethren.* But, did ever any of the brethren affirm that Mr. Campbell had given sound explications of his erroneous propositions? And this is what Mr. Currie still affirms; and therefore Mr. Currie has vindicated his positions, more than any of the brethren ever did. Mr. Currie adds, That, *the ground of complaint against the general assembly was, That she dismissed Mr. Campbell's process without censuring him.* But Mr. Currie might have known that this was not the only ground of complaint, but that it was like-
wise

wise complained, that the judicatories dismissed Mr. Campbell's errors, without any libel exhibited against him, and without ever condemning any of his errors, as contrary to the word of God and our Confession of Faith. Mr. Currie further adds, *I told, the assembly dismissed his process, because of the four explications which he gave of the positions drawn up against him.* But, if Mr. Currie had not shifted the argument, he should have told his reader how the propositions condescended upon, Def. p. 89. can be reconciled with what he himself acknowledges to be a fundamental truth. As for Mr. Campbell's position concerning self-love, and the explication that he gave of the same; Mr. Currie says, he is far from vindicating the said position, or the assembly's conduct in not giving testimony against it. Here, again, Mr. Currie is inconsistent with himself, when he would have his reader believe that Mr. Campbell never offered to defend his erroneous propositions in the sense alledged against him, Essay, p. 12. and yet says, he is far from vindicating Mr. Campbell's doctrine about self-love, or the assembly's conduct in not giving testimony against it. As for the apology he makes for the assembly's conduct in adopting Mr. Campbell's principle concerning self-love, I refer the reader to what I have said, Def. p. 94. to which Mr. Currie does not pretend to make any answer. With respect to Mr. Simson's errors upon the doctrine of the holy Trinity; since Mr. Currie has thought fit to venture his character upon it, that professor Simson disown'd the errors opposite to our Confession of Faith, wherewith he was charged. I shall give him the judgment of one who bears as great a character as Mr. Currie himself; and that is, the reverend author of the paper, entitled, *An Enquiry into Mr. Simson's Sentiments about the Trinity, from his Papers in Process*; who observes concerning Mr. Simson's declarations, Pref. p. 9. *words they may bear a sound sense, but in my opinion, says he, are very little to be regarded, while he understands them in a sense consistent with his former papers, and does not ingeniously retract his Arian tenets therein vented.* The author of the said Enquiry gives his judgment, as above, after all the declarations Mr. Simson had made, and after his speech before the assembly 1729. I directed Mr. Currie to the Enquiry on this point, and again, as Def. p. 25, 89. but he slips it over, as he does almost every argument that I advance upon this subject. Since Mr. Currie has so very inconsiderately ventured his character upon it, that Mr. Simson disowned the errors opposite to our

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Confession of Faith, wherewith he was charged; let him go to the reverend Principal of the new college of St. Andrews, and he will teach him, in his learned Enquiry, that it is evident from Mr. Simson's own papers, that he maintained Arian principles and tenets: And, if Mr. Currie will acquiesce in the judgment and reasonings of this learned man, he will see that Mr. Simson never made an ingenious retraction of his Arian tenets.

To conclude this head: After all that Mr. Currie has advanced, first in his Essay, and now in his Vindication; my argument for secession, as it is stated on the head of doctrine, stands good: Namely, gross errors, yea, such errors as subvert the foundations, and overthrow that scheme of sound doctrine held forth from the word of God in our Confession of Faith, have been vented among us; and they have been brought to the bar of the judicatories, in the several processes against Masters Simson and Campbell, and the said broachers and teachers of these gross and pernicious errors have maintained and defended the same at their bar, as truths agreeable to the word of God and our Confession of Faith; but the present judicatories of this national church have never to this day condemned particularly and expressly these errors that have been brought to their bar; they have never laid the edge of divine truth, as it is held forth from the word of God in our Confession of Faith, against such pernicious errors; nor has any adequate censure been inflicted upon the broachers and spreaders of these dangerous and gross errors: Therefore this national church, in her ecclesiastical capacity, is not the pillar and ground of truth; that is, she does not maintain and uphold, publish and declare the truths of God, especially such as have been opposed and denied; and consequently, she has not the scripture-character of the church of the living God, nor that character of a true church given in the several Confessions of the reformed churches, and in our first Confession of Faith, Art. 18. and which, according to Mr. Currie's quotation from Mr. Gillespie, (Essay, p. 3.) is given by all Protestant orthodox writers, as one, yea, as the principal mark of a true visible church; namely, the maintenance and profession of the true doctrine and the true faith. And tho' it should be alledged that there are ministers in the present established church, who are orthodox and sound in their principles, and who preach sound doctrine; yet the ecclesiastical body of which they are members do not confess the truths of Christ in opposition to the injuries that have been done

done them: Yea, they refuse to do it, notwithstanding of petitions and remonstrances for that end. And tho' the present judicatories profess their adherence to our Confession of Faith yet, if their conduct and management with respect to the many weighty and important truths that have pleaded for justice their bar, against the violence done them by adversaries, duly considered, our Confession of Faith is of no significance in the present judicatories as an ecclesiastical body; it does not distinguish between truth and error, it gives no certain and distinct sound, it is upon the matter abandoned and given up by the judicatories as a test and standard of soundness in the faith.

Ah! how does truth ly wounded and bleeding in our streets! the present judicatories have looked on, they have refused to assert the rights of injured truth, they regard not her cries she has been left, for them, to become a prey to such as will and spoil her, and to breathe out her last amongst their treacherous hands. Tho' she has looked ruefully about her, crying for help, and pleading for justice from the courts of Zion yet the ecclesiastical courts of Scotland have refused to take her by the hand, by making a free, plain and particular confession of truth, in opposition to the violence her spoilers have done her. Therefore, and for all the above reasons, it is the duty of all the lovers of truth, to make a free, open and plain confession thereof; and particularly, it is the duty of the office-bearers of the church, tho' they should be few in number, and tho' they should be born down by a majority, to lift up the standard of a judicial testimony for such truths as are opposed, controverted or denied; and, in this case, they may rest in faith and hope, that *he, upon whose shoulders the government is laid, shall build the temple of the Lord, and bear all the glory.*

S E C T. II.

Concerning the Tyranny of the present Judicatories in the Administration of Government and Discipline; and particularly, the tyrannical Sentences past by the late pretended Assemblies against the Seceding Ministers.

THE argument for secession from the present judicatories is stated, Def. p. 100. Chap. 2. Sect. 2. upon their tyranny in the administration, whereby they have

have forfeited the claim to another mark of a true church given
 in our reformed confessions, particularly in our first confession,
 Art. 18. viz. *The upright administration or exercise of church
 discipline as God's word prescribeth.* Mr. Currie tells, That he
 has no controversy with me upon what I say in this section,
 till he come to the middle of page 104. only, Vind. p. 106.
 he has no fewer than three charges against me, before he come
 that length, which I must remove out of the way, because
 some of them are turned over and over again in his Vindica-
 tion. The first charge he brings against me is of self-contradiction;
 and wherein? He tells me, that, Def. p. 101. I affirm, That the nomination or designation of the office-bearers
 of the church, unto their several offices, belongs unto the whole
 church. And this is indeed what I affirm. Mr. Currie reckons
 that I contradict myself. Why? Because, says he, I plead,
 Def. p. 311 That it is no robbing of the peoples right to
 give this nomination to the eldership. I answer, This is not
 the thing I plead in the place directed unto: But Mr. Currie
 having alledged in his Essay, That the directory 1649, for the
 calling of ministers, doth rob the people of their right to elect
 their pastors, so far, that they had not the choice of any
 of the persons to be upon the leet for ministers; in regard,
 by that act, the elders had both the nomination and the election;
 I replied to Mr. Currie's above words, in the place of
 the Defence above quoted, "Our author cannot refuse that
 "the people had a negative over their elders by the directory
 1649; and, if so, then 'tis plain the people were so far from
 "being robbed of their right to choose their own ministers,
 "that the session could not impose a minister upon them if
 "the majority of the congregation dissented; especially when
 "'tis considered, that according to the directory, when the
 "said majority dissented, they were no more obliged to give
 "their reasons for their dissent than the session for their election,
 "as Mr. Currie pleads in his *Jus Populi*, p. 125, 126."
 The judicious reader may judge for himself, if there is any
 thing in my above words that contradicts what I have affirmed,
 namely, That the nomination of office-bearers belongs to
 the whole church. And, that I may not return again to the
 question betwixt Mr. Currie and me about the foresaid directory,
 that which I plead in the Defence is, That the directory 1749
 robs not the people of their right to elect their own pastors;
 and that the directory, if it is understood in its plain and
 genuine sense, does upon the matter grant that the
 right

right of election and nomination of ministers is originally and radically in the collective church. Hence, when Mr. Currie tells his reader, Essay, p. 147. "Tho' the people had a negative upon the elders; yet they might never have the person whom they most inclined to have, if but four of ten, five of nine, &c. should be against the whole parish." I make the following reply, Def. p. 313. Our author misrepresents the directory, when he affirms, that, according to it, the people might never have the person they most inclined to have; for, from the negative which Mr. Currie in his Full Vindication proves to be given the people over the session, it rather follows, that the elders or session could never have the man they most incline to have; yea, it follows, that they can never choose any, with hopes of having him settled to be their minister, but the man whom the majority of the congregation incline to have." The Mr. Currie think fit to spend four pages, Vind. p. 303, &c. in arguing against my reasonings upon the head of the directory, yet he makes no reply to what I say above: And when Mr. Currie is pleased, Vind. p. 306. to tell the world, that the directory 1649 "was as plain a robbing of the people of the right to nominate and elect their pastors, as was the act 1732;" I shall only return him one of his own little Latin phrases which he makes use of in this place, He may draw *quidlibet ex quolibet*, i. e. *He may say any thing after this.*

Another charge Mr. Currie lays against me is, That, when I say the nomination of office-bearers belongs unto the whole church, 'tis probable I mean men and women equally. Mr. Currie frequently harps upon this in his Vindication, as p. 14. And in his remarks upon our testimony, Essay, p. 200 he has a great many queries with respect to such as have a right to call ministers: For my part, I reckoned them such trifling questions, being so little to the purpose in the present dispute betwixt him and me, that I did not think it worth my while to take notice of them. I thought it sufficient when I told him, Def. p. 314. That I do not see any difference betwixt him and the associate presbytery upon this head; and here I meant his principles as they are professed in his *Jus populi Divinum*: But he repeats his questions in his Vindication, and he reckons them to be such puzzling questions, Vind. p. 306. that I do not incline to answer them. His questions are, Whether every male or female, whether every elder and other persons in the congregation, are to have an equal voice

in settling of ministers? &c. These, and some other questions to this purpose, concerning the principle of the associate presbytery about the calling of ministers, as it is laid down Act and Testimony, p. 100. Mr. Currie alledges are very puzzling unto them: But, as I have no difficulty for my own part about his questions, nor yet any of my brethren, so far as I know; so I humbly judge I may give him this short answer to all his questions. *viz* That the daily and uniform practice of the associate presbytery, about the calling of ministers, leaves not the world in the dark concerning their principle as 'tis plainly declared in their Act and Testimony. They have had calls from several places laid before them, such as, from Morbottle, Stichel, Stow, Lintoun, Kilmawers, Balfron, the associate congregations at Edinburgh, Glasgow and about Linlithgow; one or more ministers of the associate presbytery have presided, by their appointment and direction, in the election of ministers to the several places above-mentioned; likewise, the election at the said places was not made in a corner, but openly and in the face of the sun: And Mr. Currie's intelligence of what's done in the country is not so very lame, but he may tell it in the next book that he writes, if the associate presbytery have sustained females as electors, or whether they have given the elders only a decisive voice, and the people only the liberty of consenting. I hope the reader will excuse me, when I have traced Mr. Currie for once in a matter which (to say no worse of it) is, as he frequently speaks, carping for carping's sake, or quarrelling for quarrelling's sake.

But, before I come to the question with Mr. Currie concerning the tyranny of the present judicatories in the administration, there is yet a third quarrel that Mr. Currie has with me, and that is, That I have neglected to take notice of what he delivers in his Essay, concerning the obedience and subjection that is due to the sentences of church judicatories. The reader may observe, that I introduce this section in the Defence, concerning tyranny, with a short account of our Presbyterian principles upon the head of government and discipline: And, amongst other things, I thought it sufficient to notice, that the power and authority that we give unto ecclesiastical courts is more than a mere consultative power; and that the courts of Christ's spiritual kingdom have an authoritative power; otherwise, I say, the authority of the King of Zion is not represented or manifested in them: Then I give some particular instances, to shew the absurdity of the principles

iples of such who give only a consultative power to the court
 of Zion. I also mention some cases, wherein a power of au-
 thority may and ought to be exercised by ecclesiastical courts
 and I give only a few instances, not intending to insist fur-
 ther upon this subject, because I judged it not needful in the
 present dispute. I observed likewise, that the power of ec-
 clesiastical courts is not a lordly, magisterial and legislative
 power; but a limited, ministerial and stewardly power and
 authority. But that which Mr. Currie complains I have ne-
 glected to notice is, that he had told in his Essay, p. 16
 " That if no regard was to be had to the determination of
 " judicatory, unless it be right and just in our own eyes
 " then it will not be easy to shew what more power is given
 " to superior judicatories by Presbyterians, than is given by
 " independents: For, says he, they own that synods are ne-
 " cessary to the well-being of churches." Mr. Currie adds
 That I have omitted to notice what power (he says) Indepen-
 dents give to synods in their Confession of Faith, Mather's
 history of New-England, Book 3. p. 57. Mr. Currie tran-
 scribes the words of that Confession, Vind. p. 106. to which
 I answer, The associate presbytery have declared their prin-
 ciples concerning that obedience and subjection that is due
 unto ecclesiastical synods, in the express words of our West-
 minster Confession of Faith, Act and Testimony, p. 99. and
 I reckon I have no concern with the New-English Confession
 further than as it agrees with our own Confession, Chap. 3
 Art. 3. He tells me likewise, that I have not made the least
 reply to what he cited from the *Apologetical Relation*, Master
 Webster and Durham, from the practice of Mr. Rutherford
 when he went to Aberdeen; and he adds, in his *Vindication*
 Cartwright and Apollonius. I answer, I have no occasion to
 make the least reply to any of his quotations, and that because
 I know no other power that any of the authors he mentions
 give unto synods, than that which our Confession of Faith
 grants them; and this is what I and what all the associate
 presbytery do acknowledge. As for Mr. Rutherford's practice
 in going to Aberdeen, he went in obedience to a sentence of
 the high commission court; and, if Mr. Currie will have the
 high commission to have been either a synod or an ecclesiasti-
 cal court, I believe he is the first of the Presbyterian deno-
 mination that has acknowledged it as such.

Mr. Currie, upon this head of the power of judicatories
 affirms; " That I have said nothing in answer to his above

" authors

authors, more than the brethren did, in their review to
 what was said in the commission's Narrative to the same
 purpose, in the case of Mr. Erskine's protestation against the
 assembly May 14th, 1733." But Mr. Currie might have
 known, that the argument of the Narrative-writers, for sub-
 jection to unjust sentences wherein the public cause of God
 and a testimony for truth is concerned, is considered in all the
 force and strength in which the commission's committee did
 stress it up, and likewise fully answered in the Review, parti-
 cularly from page 48th to 62d, to which I refer Mr. Currie;
 and there he will find, that the brethren have proven, that
 when sentences are past by ecclesiastical courts, which pre-
 judge the public cause of God and a testimony for truth, that
 in this case obedience to such sentences, or a silent submission
 unto them, is a departing from a testimony for truth, and a
 giving-up with the cause of God. Mr. Currie may likewise
 see from the Review, that the Protestant principle, concern-
 ing that judgment of discretion which belongs to all the
 members of the church, does not introduce the licentious
 principle above mentioned by Mr. Currie viz. *That no re-
 gard is to be had to the determination of a judicatory, unless it
 be right and just in our own eyes*: And therefore I refer Mr.
 Currie to the Review upon this head likewise; and I wish, that
 before he tell his reader again, in his random manner, that the
 brethren have said nothing upon this head in answer to the
 Narrative, that he would first consider and answer what they
 have said in the place I have directed him unto. The Narra-
 tive writers have hitherto been silent in their own cause, it
 seems they have now got Mr. Currie to take up his pen in their
 defence: I doubt not but they will make their acknowlege-
 ments to him for the service he has done them; but, in the
 mean time, they have led him into the same ditch into which
 they themselves have fallen: For I find that Mr. Currie is not
 satisfied that he has said enough in this place upon the head
 of subjection to church judicatories; and therefore he returns
 again to the argument, perhaps at the direction of the Narra-
 tive-writers, Vind. p. 339. where he affirms "That; if church-
 judicatories have any power above or beyond that which is
 only consultative, it must at least be this, *That their senten-
 ces are to be submitted unto, tho' we cannot see the equity of
 them*. I own, that in private and personal causes, or in causes
 that only concern one's self, the sentences of church judicato-
 ries are to be submitted unto, tho' we do not see the equity

of them; but in matters of public concern, wherein the cause of God and a public testimony for truth are concerned, to assert that in this case the sentences of church judicatories are to be submitted unto, tho' we do not see the equity of them. I affirm that it is an anti reformation principle, and that hereby a blind implicate obedience to the sentences of church judicatories is established; for, according to Mr. Currie, as the above proposition is laid, tho' the sentences of the church judicatory should affect the public cause of God, the cause must be given up to the arbitrary will and pleasure of men, at least we must give a silent submission unto them, *when we cannot see the equity of such sentences*. It does not help Mr. Currie out of the mire, when he acknowledges in the same place, that the determinations of church judicatories, tho' of general assemblies are never to be received, so as to give the least positive obedience to them, unless they be consonant to God's word and consonant unto it in our esteem; I say, this does not help him out of the mire, when he adds, "Yet unless we are to submit unto them, so as not to act against nor in opposition unto them; I cannot see an hair's breadth of difference between the principle of Presbyterians from that which is the principle of Independants in this particular, which (Mr. Currie adds) I take to be the main thing in controversy with them. I shall be far from saying, that Mr. Currie has not understood the controversy betwixt Presbyterians and Independants in this particular; but I will venture to say, That 'tis a reproach upon our Presbyterian principles, when he affirms, that according to the foresaid principles we must submit to church judicatories, *so as not to act against or in opposition unto them*. When this is maintained without the above limitation or restriction, as Mr. Currie does, then 'tis evident and plain we must be silent, we must not act against them, nor oppose them, tho' they should bear down the cause of Christ. When it is considered, that, in causes merely private and personal, the sentences of church judicatories are to be submitted unto, tho' we cannot see the equity of them, it is plain that every man's private judgment is not made the *last resort*; and, if Mr. Currie had noticed this, he might have spared his boast of a "Farewel all use of church-judicatories except it be for counsel or advice." But if in the public cause of God, wherein the declarative honour and glory of the Redeemer, and wherein a testimony for reformation principles once attained unto, are concerned; if (I say) in this case Mr. Currie is pleased with a silent submission unto the sen-

of the church, when he gives not an active or positive obedience unto them, the cause of truth is betrayed, and a testimony for truth is given up. If Mr. Currie thinks that, in the case above-mentioned, we are so far to submit to the judicatories as not to act against them or in opposition unto them, he cannot but know, that if Luther and our other reformers had set out upon this principle, if they had not acted against and in opposition unto the sentences of ecclesiastical courts in their time, the reformation would have been choked in the bud, and we might to this day have been groaning under Antichristian tyranny and bondage.

I have diverted too long from my present enquiry, which is, Whether or not Mr. Currie has entered into my argument as I have laid it, concerning the tyranny of the present judicatories in their administration of government and discipline, whereby they have forfeited their claim to one of the characters of a true church, given in our reformed Confessions of Faith? And, for proof of this, in the section of the Defence above-mentioned, I give several particular instances of that tyranny in the administration which takes place in the present judicatories.

The first instance I give is, A continued series and tract of violent settlements for above twenty years bypast, whereby ministers have been intruded upon dissenting and reclaiming congregations, either upon the footing of presentations in consequence of the act restoring patronages, or upon the footing of the act of assembly 1732, which, tho' now repealed, has been put in practice by the judicatories both before and since that time. The present judicatories, by their above conduct and management, exercise a lordly dominion over the heritage of God; they rob and spoil them of their just rights and privileges, and break and scatter them in all corners of the land.

I have observed in the Defence, That Mr. Currie owns, that the charge of violent intrusions is what the judicatories can least be vindicated from: But he tells his reader, Essay. p. 30. That, as there hath been a considerable struggle made by many ministers of this church against them, a considerable stop hath been put to them for *some time bygone*; so, whatever ground there is for lamentation, there is no sufficient ground for separation from the church of Scotland, notwithstanding of such intrusions." Upon the first part of the above words I make the following observations, Def. p. 105, 106. "It is true, that both ministers and many other
 662 " church"

"church-members have made a considerable struggle against
 "intrusions, as appears from the Narrative I have given in
 "the introduction; but then, such as are strangers to affairs a-
 "mongst us in Scotland, and who read the above words of
 "our author, may readily apprehend that the struggles he
 "mentions have had such desirable success, that the presen-
 "t judicatories are repenting and reforming that course of vio-
 "lence which they have practised against the Lord's heritage
 "and flock in Scotland: But I appeal to our author himself
 "if he can honestly say that the judicatories are either re-
 "penting or reforming their violence. Whether our author's
 "words may be reckoned an extenuating of the sin of the
 "judicatories, or whether or not, as they are laid, they have
 "an evident tendency to impose upon the world, I leave
 "to the reader, who knows the state of matters with us in
 "Scotland, to judge for himself."

Mr. Currie replies to my above reasonings, Vind. p. 109
 in the following manner; "Mr. Wilson carps, because I have
 "said, A considerable struggle has been made by many mini-
 "sters in this church against violent intrusions." But my
 words bear no such thing as carping at what he says concern-
 ing these struggles; I grant that *it is true*, that considerable
 struggles have been made. Mr. Currie adds, Yet Mr. Wilson
 asks, *What success have they had?* But I ask no such question.
 If Mr. Currie had not perverted my words, or shifted the ar-
 gument, he ought to have told that the question I asked him
 is, Whether or not he can honestly say, that the judicatories
 are repenting or reforming their violence? But Mr. Currie
 according to his usual way of dealing, sets his thumb upon
 this, and palms upon me a question which, in the manner
 reported by Mr. Currie, my words give not the least ground
 for. If Mr. Currie had spoke to the purpose, he should have
 told his reader, that my words gave ground for the following
 question, *viz.* Have the struggles of ministers and many other
 church-members had such desirable success, that the present
 judicatories are repenting and reforming that course of vio-
 lence they have practised against the Lord's heritage and flock
 in Scotland? But it was not safe for Mr. Currie to state the
 question after this manner, for he would have found conside-
 rable difficulty in the answering of it. When I tell Mr. Cur-
 rie, that his words, *a considerable stop hath been put to violent*
intrusions for some time bygone, if they are not an extenua-
ting of the sin of the judicatories, they have an evident ten-

tendency to impose upon the world; Mr. Currie replies, That, if his words have such a tendency, he has not been singular: For the reverend Mr. Willison saith so in his appendix to his sermon 1734; also Mr. Ebenezer Erskine, yea, Mr. Willson himself, tho', says he, it seems his memory has failed him; and likewise the brethren in their reasons of not-acceding, they all say so. But Mr. Currie is very much mistaken; for none of the brethren he mentions says what he alledges. They indeed acknowledge, that the assembly 1734 did put a stop to the violent proceedings of some former assemblies; but none of them say, that a considerable stop has been put *for some time bygone* (viz. since the year 1733) to violent intrusions. Mr. Currie may know, that he published his Essay a short time before the meeting of the assembly 1738; he also knows, that three assemblies intervened betwixt the assembly 1734 and the fore said assembly. ; and, if Mr. Currie's memory had not failed him, he might have known, that I have upon good grounds affirmed, That the several assemblies after the year 1734 have returned to the practice of countenancing and supporting violent settlements; and, if Mr. Currie will suffer himself to see it, he cannot but know, that they continue in the same tyrannical course and practice to this very day: Therefore I speak the truth, and am very consistent with myself, when I tell Mr. Currie, That his words have an evident tendency to impose upon the world or, that they may be reckoned an extenuating the sin of the judicatories, when he tells his reader, that a *considerable stop* has been put to violent intrusions *for some time bygone*. If Mr. Currie reckons this a thrust at his character, I wish that for the time to come he may have so much regard to his own character, as to be more cautious in his assertions; but, when he calls my words a *designed thrust* at his character, I shall leave this amongst the rest of his uncharitable heart judgments.

As I reckon intrusions, or the violent settlement of ministers, a high act of tyranny in the administration; so, that which I insist upon in my argument is, That the present judicatories are not only guilty of tyranny in this matter in one or two particular instances, but that they are guilty of an habitual tract of tyranny over the heritage of God in Scotland, in the settlement of ministers, for above twenty years past. That the settlement of ministers is an act of tyranny, I prove, Def. p. 107. from Mr. Currie's Jus Popi Div. pref. p. 4. where he gives it as a reformation principle from Calvin and

Calderwood, That it is an *impious robbing of the church, rapine and sacrilege, to settle any minister whether the people consent or not.* Upon this head Mr. Currie tells me, Vind. p. 111. "That he is as much for the peoples right this day as ever tho' he cannot see that there is any such tyranny in the church of Scotland as obliges people to separate from her." He goes on in the same place to purge the present judicatories of habitual tyranny in this particular instance; "For, says Mr. Currie, albeit I own it is to be lamented there have been many violent settlements in the church of Scotland since the restoring patronages, yet she is not habitually guilty of acts of oppression in this matter." He goes on, p. 113. and tells his reader, "That Mr. Wilson has not cited one sentence from any of his writings from which he can justly infer that our present judicatories are habitually guilty of violent intrusions." To all which I reply, That I never alledged that Mr. Currie calls violent intrusions by the name of *tyranny*: neither did I ever alledge, that he owns that the church of Scotland is habitually guilty of tyranny in this particular; for I know that he affirms the contrary in his Essay, as he does in the above words of his present Vindication: But that which I say is, That, if Mr. Currie refuses to own that violent settlements are acts of tyranny, he is inconsistent with himself, or, he eats in what he had said in his Jus Pop. Div. viz. That it is impious robbery, rapine and sacrilege, to settle a minister whether the people will or not. And, when Mr. Currie purges the present judicatories of habitual tyranny in this matter, it is in vain to deal with such a man by argument or reason; his confident assertion flies in the face of open and manifest fact: 'Tis as clear as day-light, that if violent settlements are *impious robbery, sacrilege and rapine*, that then the present judicatories are habitually guilty in this matter of tyranny in the administration. Mr. Currie may blindfold or amuse strangers, who know not our present circumstances in Scotland, when he tells them in his books, That a *considerable stop* has been put for *some time bygone* to violent settlements, and that the present judicatories are not guilty of habitual tyranny in this matter; but, I am sure, all in Scotland who reckon that the settlement of ministers over dissenting and reclaiming congregations is contrary to the word of God, and that liberty wherewith Christ hath made his people free; such, I say, cannot but judge that the present judicatories are guilty of habitual tyranny and oppression in all the corners of this church and land; and that they are not repenting

of the wickedness that they have done, nor reforming their violence: Yea, they cannot but judge that it is true what I assert in my Defence, That, when presbyteries take the patrons or heritors man by the hand they support, strengthen and encourage the heritors in such severities as they have threatened and exercised upon people, when they do not give in to the man whom the heritors think fit to chuse for their minister. Tho' Mr. Currie alledges, that it cannot be proven that the judicatories allow; yet, when they despise and neglect the people, and, in opposition to them, take the heritors man by the hand, they support and encourage the heritors in such severities. And I intend no thrust at Mr. Currie's character when I affirm, that his refusing the above notour facts has a tendency, not only to impose upon the world, but even upon the common sense of mankind. Mr. Currie alledges, That I am obliged to tell my reader, that he is as much for the peoples right this day as ever; But he must excuse me when I tell him, that I do not reckon myself under any such obligation; especially when I consider the observation I have made in the preceding first chapter, upon his words, Vind. p. 113. as also, when I consider, that he continues to purge the judicatories of habitual tyranny in the violent settlement of ministers. Whatever his former thoughts were, he appears to me to make but very little now of the peoples right, or his Jus Populi Divinum. Tho' Mr. Currie gives not intrusions the name of tyranny, yet, in his reasonings upon this head, he expresses himself in the following manner; "I cannot see there is any such tyranny in the church of Scotland as obliges people to separate from her." Mr. Currie knows very well how to wrap up himself in ambiguous terms; therefore I shall not take it upon me to determine, whether his above words do import an acknowledgement that violent settlements are an act of tyranny, &c. Whatever be in this, I think it proper to advertise the reader, that tho' I judge that the present judicatories are tyrannical, yea, guilty of habitual tyranny in this respect; yet my argument upon tyranny in the administration is not stated upon this particular only, but upon all the several instances I give, in the Defence, of their tyrannical proceedings. And, because I have insisted so long upon this instance, I shall in some other particulars only direct my reader to the particular places of the Defence, where, after he has compared them with Mr. Currie's Vindication, he may see with his own eyes that Mr. Currie has never entered

into the argument. 'Tis like Mr. Currie in his boasting manner may tell his reader in his next, that his reasons are unanswerable; but, from the swatch I have given the reader of his arguings upon this first instance of tyranny, he may judge of the rest. For my part, I judge them so trifling, that I do not think it worth my while to spend time further upon them. And I think it proper to be the shorter upon the instances of the tyranny of the present judicatories, that have cast up since writing the Defence.

The second instance I give of tyranny in the administration is, the act of assembly 1733, appointing the reverend Mr. Ebenezer Erskine to be rebuked *for impugning several acts of assembly and proceedings of the church judicatories*; by which act and sentence, ministerial freedom was condemned, and the ministers of this church were bound up from testifying against such proceeding of church judicatories, and such acts of assembly, which might have a direct tendency to subvert our constitution, and to enslave the flock and heritage of God: For Mr. Erskine's doctrine, for which he was rebuked, was directed against the act 1732, and the violent proceedings of the church judicatories in the settlement of ministers.

In the third place, The tyranny of the judicatories did yet rise higher; when, in consequence of an act and sentence of the foresaid assembly, four ministers were thrust out from ministerial communion with the judicatories, for a protestation against the above act and sentence restricting ministerial freedom, and that merely for their own exoneration, and for asserting their privilege and duty to testify publicly against steps of defection upon all proper occasions. Upon the above heads, Mr. Currie in his Vindication repeats over what he had said in his Essay, without ever entering into the argument as I have laid it in the Defence. As for instance, he alleges, That the act of the assembly 1733 against the four brethren was repealed by what was done in the assembly 1734, and by the synod of Perth and Stirling in consequence of the said deed; but he never once enters into my reasons, by which I prove that the act 1733 against the brethren was never either formally or materially repealed. Tho' he pretends to follow me foot for foot, yet he passeth over my reasonings in deep silence, particularly the argument as I lay it before him from the brethrens paper, intituled, *Reasons of not acceding.*

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The reader may see all this with his own eyes, if he compares Defence, p. 111, 112, 113, 114. with Vind. p. 116, 117.

With respect to the restricting of ministerial freedom in testifying doctrinally against the sinful proceedings of church-judicatories, which I affirm is plainly condemned by the act of assembly 1733; Mr Currie never once touches the argument as I have laid it, Def. p. 114. from the middle, and p. 115, 116. compared with Vind. p. 116, 117. where the reader will find that he tells over and over again, what he has learned from his new friends the Narrative writers, to wit, That Mr. Erskine was not rebuked for testifying against the act 1732 and other proceedings of church judicatories, but for the manner of doing it: But this is fully answered by the brethren in their review of the Narrative, p. 9, 10, 11. I shall only further observe upon this head, that Mr. Currie tells his reader, Vind. p. 116. That once he took the sentence against Mr. Erskine to be for impugning the act 1732 and the other proceedings of church-judicatories; but he finds that this is absolutely denied by such as voted in that sentence, who, he says, continue to affirm that it was for the manner of doing it. But it seems, that whatever Mr Currie's thoughts about the act 1733 were formerly, that he is become so obsequious now to his new friends the Narrative writers, that he will take their say, in direct contradiction to the express words of the act of assembly; but he might have known, that their above affirmation was an after-invention, to extricate themselves out of the thickets, in which they found themselves intangled by their arbitrary act and sentence.

The tyranny of the judicatories did yet further increase, when, by an act of the same assembly 1733, the highest censures of the church are denounced against ministers, if they dispense sealing ordinances to such as are aggrieved with intruders; and whereby people who cannot submit to the ministry of such who, even in Mr. Currie's account in his *Jus Populi Divinum* above quoted, are impious robbers, guilty of rapine and sacrilege, are excommunicated from sealing ordinances. This was done materially by the act of the foresaid assembly against the ministers of the presbytery of Dunfermline.

A fifth instance of the tyranny of the present judicatories is, That, by the above-mentioned acts and deeds, several sinful and unwarrantable terms of communion are imposed upon the ministers and other members of this church. I treat of this act of tyranny in a Section by itself, Def. p. 127. and
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in the same place I condescend upon four new and unwarrantable terms of communion; and I prove, that by the act of assembly 1733, against the protesting ministers and the ministers of the presbytery of Dunfermline, unwarrantable terms of communion are imposed upon the ministers and members of this church, Def. p. 129, 130, 131, which the reader is pleased to compare with Vind. p. 132. he will find, that Mr. Currie repeats the same things again and again, without ever entering into the argument. There is indeed one new thing advanced by Mr. Currie, and that is an appeal to the reverend Mr. Erskine, Vind. p. 131. to whom he gives a very just character; and it is Mr. Currie's ordinary, when any author is alledged by him for the support as he may apprehend of his argument, some great character or other is given him, tho' perhaps in other respects he may differ widely from him. And what is it that the reverend Mr. Erskine says? Says Mr. Currie, He pleads in his *reasons of appeal*, That our Confession of Faith, form of church-government, and other subordinate standards, are the only terms of ministerial communion amongst us; and that the synod by their sentence rebuking him for preaching against the act 1732, made the said act a term of ministerial communion; and therefore, says Mr. Currie, Mr. Erskine argues, That, if the foresaid act be a term of ministerial communion, why not other acts? *See State of the process*, p. 43. Mr. Currie might have added, That the brethren who dissented from the sentence of that synod, argued in the same way and manner, *State process*, p. 57. To all which I reply, That Mr. Erskine in his above reasonings as they are more fully set down in the *State of the process*, and all the dissenting brethren, argued very justly as the case then stood; But, what is the amount of Mr. Currie's reasonings upon this head? It is even this; Mr. Erskine pleads, That, when he was rebuked for testifying against a particular act of assembly, the synod of Perth did thereby make particular acts of assembly terms of ministerial communion; but the assembly 1733 who met half a year thereafter, and who affirmed the sentences of the synod of Perth and Stirling, and who condemned Mr. Erskine for *impugning acts of assembly* and proceedings of church-judicatories, have not by their authority established new terms of ministerial communion. Who may not see the weakness and inconsistency of such reasoning? If I were to speak in Mr. Currie's strain, I would say, It is unworthy of the weakest; but I shall only say, His above
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going from Mr. Erskine's reasons of appeal is, as he sometimes speaks, a mere *blind and fallacy*.

The last instance I give of tyranny in the administration, Def. p. 117. is, the contempt the present judicatories have cast upon the petitions and representations of ministers and other church members, who have come to their bar, spreading out their lamentable grievances before them, and craving, that the judicatories might discharge their duty, for the honour of God and the relief of his oppressed heritage: But, what treatment have such petitions and representations met with? They have even been refused a simple reading; the judicatories were so far from taking their grievances under consideration, that they would not read their petitions in open court: Yes, a considerable body of ministers with some ruling elders, when they came before the assembly 1732 with a petition and representation of grievances, their petition could not get the common right and privilege of a transmit unto the assembly: And when they came to the bar of the assembly, with their petitions in their hands, demanding that piece of common justice, to have their petition read and considered; tho' they were office-bearers in the house of God, they were despised and quite disregarded, as if they had not been church-members. This obliged some of them to give in a signed protestation in their own name, and in the name of the rest of the subscribers of the petition, "For the preservation of the just rights belonging to them, as men, Christians, and office bearers in this church, by the light of nature, word of God, constitutions of this church, claim of right, laws of the land, and manifold approved precedents since the reformation to this day, to have representations and petitions ancient grievances — received, openly read, and taken into serious consideration, &c." The above deed of the assembly is what I call, in the Defence, a piece of the greatest tyranny; and Mr. Currie was one of the ministers that signed the above protestation: And yet in his Vindication, p. 119. he tells his reader, That tho' they had a right to present their petition, and a right to ask that it should be read and considered, and tho' he thought the assembly was to blame in refusing to consider it; yet he never had such a notion of tyranny, or of any tyranny at all. What, was there no tyranny at all in it, when Mr. Currie and others were denied a privilege which, they protested in such a public manner, did belong to them as men and

and Christians, by the very light of nature, as well as the word of God, &c. and yet no tyranny at all? One might blush at such bare-faced inconsistencies. 'Tis but a sorry evasion, what Mr. Currie tells his reader, "That one may have a good right to demand a thing, and present a petition; and yet a judicatory may judge it inconvenient to receive it, and not consider it at that season." I hope Mr. Currie was dealing sincerely, when he sign'd that protestation with his other brethren; and that he thought, at that time at least, that, when the assembly refused their petition a reading, they were denying their just rights and privileges as men and Christians, &c. And therefore his little Latin phrase about positive duty, That they bind *semper*, but not *ad semper*, tho' it may amuse some of his readers, stands him in little stead here: And, the reader that knows not the Latin, would know the meaning of Mr. Currie's Latin phrase, it is this in plain English, That it was not a positive duty, obliging the assembly 1732, at that time to read and consider the petition and representation of a body of ministers that came to their bar with their grievances, besides a petition and representation by upwards of 150 members of this church from different corners of the land. But, as this appears to me to be inconsistent with his above protestation, so, in his way of writing, he makes but a very small account of the neglect, yea, even the contempt, that the said assembly did cast, not only upon such a body of ministers and people, but also upon the seasonable and necessary duty of contending and witnessing against the course of defecting and backsliding which at that time prevailed in the church.

I proceed now to give some other instances of tyranny in the administration of the judicatories, which have taken place since I published the Defence. And, to clear my way, I must give a short narrative of some proceedings of the judicatories and of the conduct and behaviour of the seceding brethren under them.

The general assembly that met *anno* 1738 having past an act concerning the seceding ministers, containing many grievous and calumnious charges, in like manner impowering their commission to prepare a libel against them, and to call them before the subsequent assembly 1739. I have already examined the act and deed of the foresaid assembly 1738 Def. p. 169, 170, &c. and therefore I shall not here make any further reflections upon it, but refer my reader to what has been observed.

The commission of the assembly 1738 did, in consequence of the powers that were given them, prepare a libel against the seceding brethren. The libel was put into their hands, and they were cited to appear before the assembly 1739. When the libel and citation was given them, the seceding ministers judged it their duty to enquire into the language of this providence, and into the duties they were thereby called unto: And, some time being spent in prayer and conference upon this head, they judged that the present providence was a plain call unto them to carry their testimony somewhat further than hitherto they had done. They had already declared a secession from the judicatories, upon the grounds and reasons published to the world in their first testimony; they had also found it their duty to continue in their secession, notwithstanding of the act and deed of the assembly 1734, which the assembly 1738 call an act of clemency towards them: and they had in like manner published their reasons for continuing in secession from them, in their paper, entitled, *Reasons of Not acceding to the judicatories, &c.* But the brethren considering, that they had never yet judicially enquired into the authority and constitution of the present judicatories, who, instead of reforming, were refusing to return unto the Lord, and who, instead of hearkning to the means used to reclaim them, were libelling and citing ministers as criminals unto their bar, for lifting up a judicial testimony for our covenanted principles; they did now see and find it to be their duty to decline the authority of the present judicatories, and to hold and repute them to be neither lawful nor right constitute courts of Christ: And accordingly, a draught of their act and declinature being prepared, it was unanimously approved and enacted at Edinburgh, May 16th, 1739. And, being called the following day before the assembly, they went in as a presbytery constitute in the name of the Head and King of Zion: And their moderator, having told that assembly so much, read in their presence their act of presbytery, *Finding and declaring, that the present judicatories of this national church are not lawful nor right-constitute courts of Christ; and declining all authority, power and jurisdiction, that the said judicatories may claim to themselves over the said presbytery, or any of the members thereof, or over any that are under their inspection.* I must here beg leave to make a few remarks upon what I have narrated above; namely, That, by the good hand of providence upon the seceding brethren, they have been
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led from one step to another, in their aims at witness-
work. I noticed, in my introduction to the Defence, a gra-
dual series of contending in the judicatories, before the seces-
sion was declared: At length they are thrust out from com-
munion with the established church; whereupon they declar-
ed a secession from them, in the manner that the same is ex-
pressed before the commission November 1733. When the
assembly 1734 pass what is called their act of clemency, the
brethren judged it their duty to stand still where they were
to see if the judicatories would return to the Lord, or if they
would shew a disposition to lift up a judicial testimony for
injured truth: But the seceding ministers having continued
for some time waiting, and finding from the conduct of the
assemblies 1735 and 1736, that, instead of reforming, they
were going on in their backsliding course; and that truth
had gotten a new and deep wound, particularly by the con-
duct of the said assembly 1736: they found themselves at last
obliged to emit their act, declaration and testimony, which
bears date at Perth December 3d, 1736, and which was pub-
lished in the beginning of the year 1737. And no sooner
their testimony published, than the alarm is taken, the seceding
ministers are cried down as gross schismatics, deluders of the
people, and usurpers of a paramount power, and what need
A testimony for truth still torments the men that dwell upon
the earth, and sets them upon killing and slaying the witness.
Yes. If the seceding ministers had sit silent in their houses
if they had not emitted a judicial testimony for truth, the ju-
dicatories would never have troubled them for their not atten-
dance upon the said judicatories; but now, when they make
a public and open confession of Scotland's covenanted prin-
ciples, and endeavour to point out their lamentable deviation
and backslidings from the same both in former and present
times, they are libelled and summoned in the manner I have
reported: And their act and testimony is one of the chief
special grounds of libel against them. But what is the effect
of all this procedure? The seceding ministers are led, by the
good hand of God upon them, to enlarge their testimony
and judicially to find and declare, that the present judicatories
are not lawful nor right constitute courts of Christ. And the
sentence pronounced against them was intimate in the most
public manner; namely, in face of a general assembly, and
before a numerous crowd of spectators. After this, I may
justly speak or write of the present judicatories as pretended
assemblies, pretended synods, &c.

I must further observe, That the presbytery's act and declinature being now published to the world, it speaks for itself; and I am not afraid to say, that the grounds upon which it stands are supported from the word of God, and the principles of this reformed church agreeable thereto: Likewise, their said act contains a summary of the reasons of their secession. Mr. Currie sometimes nibbles at their act and declinature, but he never once pretends to enter into the argument as it is there laid; and I humbly judge, that the grounds and reasons, upon which the presbytery go in their declinature, are such as will support themselves, if the word of God, and their reformation principles agreeable thereto, shall be admitted to judge betwixt the present judicatories and the associate presbytery. And I'll venture to say, That Mr. Currie does nothing but thresh the water, after all that he has said in his Essay, and now in his voluminous Vindication, unless he take up the argument as it is laid in the presbytery's act and declinature. And, if he would serve his masters the present pretended assemblies and their commissions more effectually, I would advise him, that, when he writes again, he may go thro' with the argument as it is laid by the presbytery in their said act, without diverting unto the *says* of this or the other great man, or without making a retreat to his usual reflections upon the former period betwixt 1638 and 1650. I am persuaded, such a way of doing can never pass for argument with any who are willing, without prejudice and bias, to enquire into the present controversy.

After the presbytery had intimate their above act and declinature, the foresaid pretended assembly came to an act and sentence, whereby they find the libel against the seceding ministers relevant to infer deposition; and they likewise find it proven, in its most material articles, from the presbytery's act and declinature: And therefore they find and declare, that the seceding ministers do justly merit the highest censures of this church, particularly that of deposition; but they declare, for the reasons given in their act, to come to a final sentence at that time, and they refer the same to the next general assembly, to whom they earnestly recommend it to inflict the censure of deposition without further delay, unless the said ministers retract their act and declinature, and return to, what the assembly calls their duty, submission to this church. The seceding ministers have, together with their act and declinature, published some observes upon the above-mentioned libel, and also upon the above act of that pretended assembly:

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I refer the reader to them, and I shall only beg leave to join the following observes.

When the presbytery came in, before the assembly and their declinature, the moderator of the said assembly told them, as their act bears, *That, tho' they were called here in answer to a libel, the assembly were very loth to be obliged to proceed upon it; and that, if the said defenders would shew a disposition to return to the duty and obedience they owe to this church, the assembly was ready to forgive all that was past, and to receive them with open arms.* Hence it is plain that the said pretended assembly had no error in doctrine or lay to their charge; neither had they any thing in their words and conversation as ministers or Christians to charge them with; nothing of this nature could be alledged as ground of libel against them: Why are they then libelled, prosecuted and persecuted? It is purely and only for their secession, and for what concerns the same; it is because they continued in a secession, tho' the judicatories themselves did at first thrust some of them out: Yea, it is because they have emitted, as a presbytery, a testimony for Scotland's covenanted principles, against a course of defection from the same; and I dare say they would have reckoned it matter of joy and praise, if the judicatories would have done this themselves. Further, they are prosecuted and persecuted because they keep fasts throughout several corners of the land, at the desire of such as profess themselves to be grieved with the manifold sins and provocations of the judicatories, and of all ranks of persons in the land, both in former and present times; and if the judicatories would have sanctified a fast, and called a solemn assembly upon the particular grounds and causes of the Lord's indignation and wrath against this sinful church and land, the associate presbytery would have reckoned themselves relieved of a very great burden. Again, they are prosecuted and persecuted because they have entered into a presbyterial association, for a judicial confession of the truths, in opposition to the manifold injuries that have been done them; as also, in order to license and ordain men for the holy ministry. Must the sheep of Christ be left to wander upon the mountains? Must they be left to the wild beasts of prey, or to impious robbers, and such violent proceedings of the judicatories, which, as I observed already, Mr. Currie once termed impious robbery, sacrilege and rapine? Unless the seceding ministers had associate

their relief, the scattered flock of Christ must in all outward probability have remained in the circumstances mentioned, without any gospel-minister or any ecclesiastical judicatory to care for them, or to take any watch or oversight of them. The above are the chief articles of libel against the seceding ministers: They are not charged with any error in doctrine, nor with any thing immoral in their practice, this pretended assembly, by the mouth of their moderator, being judges; yet they adjudge them to all the highest censures of the church, particularly that of deposition, and warmly recommend it to the ensuing assembly to pass the said sentence against them.

There is yet another thing I must observe in the conduct of this pretended assembly, and that is, They sentenced eight ministers to deposition, who own and acknowledge our Presbyterian church-government, and the whole doctrine contained in our Confession of Faith as the Confession of their faith, and who reckon themselves bound and obliged, by their ordination vows and engagements, and by our solemn national covenants, to make a judicial confession of the truths of our God, and to assert and maintain the same in their station and capacity, against the manifest injuries that have been done them in this day of treading down in our valley of vision: And yet at the same time, and with the same breath almost, they took off the sentence of deposition, past by a commission of assembly March 1730, against Mr. John Glas upon the account of his Sectarian principles. Tho' he denies the divine right of our Presbyterian church government, and endeavours to erect Sectarian meetings in all corners of the land where he can have any influence; and tho' he runs down the Confessions of Faith, together with these excellent and useful means of instruction, our Larger and Shorter Catechisms; and tho' his writings are stuffed with several other extravagancies; as also, tho' he continues to maintain, defend and read his gross principles: Yet this pretended assembly found, their act and sentence concerning him bears, "That his principles are not inconsistent with his being a minister; and therefore they restore him to the character of a minister of the gospel of Christ:" Declaring at the same time, that his principles are inconsistent with the constitution of this church. Let the unbiassed part of mankind judge themselves, if the proceedings of this pretended assembly were consistent with the truth, or even with themselves; can they judge the principles of eight ministers inconsistent

with their being ministers of the gospel of Christ, tho' the ministers own our Confession of Faith, and the divine right of our Presbyterian church-government; merely because they refuse to join in church-communion with the present judicatories, for the weighty grounds and causes contained in the act and declinature: And yet the said pretended assembly find at the same time, that the principles of a man are consistent with his being a minister of the gospel, whose principles they themselves declare to be inconsistent with the constitution of the church.

In consequence of the above act and deed of the assembly 1739, and according to their earnest recommendation, the pretended assembly that met 1740 did, upon the relevancy and proof of the libel as above-stated, proceed to give sentence against the seceding ministers, which is expressed in the following terms, *This assembly did, and hereby do in the name of Lord Jesus Christ the sole King and Head of his church, and in the virtue of the power and authority committed by him to the presbytery, actually depose Messrs. Ebenezer Erskine at Stirling &c. and his associates, from the office of the holy ministry; prohibiting and discharging them, and every one of them, to exercise the same or any part thereof, within this church in all time coming.* Their charges are declared vacant from the date of this sentence; and they appoint their moderator to write letters to the magistrates of the respective burghs concerned, with copies of the said sentence. This singular and extraordinary sentence, whereby eight ministers are said to be deposed from the office of the holy ministry, who are neither charged with error in doctrine nor with any thing immoral in their practice, only for their departing, upon the grounds and reasons contained in their act and declinature, from ecclesiastical communion with the present judicatories, and for their acting in a judicial capacity by themselves for the support of our constituted principles, is a special instance of the tyranny of the present administration. And, for the illustration of this, we must make the following observes:

I lay it down as a Presbyterian, yea, as a Protestant principle, That all the power and authority that ecclesiastical judicatories have, is a limited and ministerial authority; that power and authority is limited by the word of God as supreme rule, Isa. viii. 20. As also, when any reformed church has received and adopted a sett of principles as agreeable to the word of God, and has laid them down in a Confession

Faith, or in ecclesiastical acts and constitutions, she is limited by these, as the subordinate rule and standard, in all her particular determinations: And therefore I subsume, That the determinations and decisions of the judicatories of a church ought to bear some evidence and stamp of their being agreeable to the rule; and every church judicatory should evidence her acts and determinations to be agreeable to these principles which they have received and adopted, in conformity to the supreme rule and standard, namely, the word of God. As ministers in the exercise of the key of doctrine, so the office-bearers of the church in their judicative capacity, ought to declare only the mind of Christ from his word to the members of the church: It is the voice of Christ that Christ's sheep ought to hear, whether from the pulpit or from the courts of the Lord's house. The bare *say* of ministers or judicatories does not bind the consciences of church-members; both ministers and judicatories ought to give some evidence that what they say is the mind and will of the Lord Jesus himself, the only Lawgiver to his church and people: But both the late pretended assemblies, in contradiction to the above Protestant principle, have dealt with the seceding ministers in a magisterial and lordly manner, by mere church power and authority; they have deposed them: Why? Because they have seceded, because they have given in a declinature, finding and declaring as their declinature narrates. But, have they ever examined the grounds of their secession? Have they ever compared them with the law and the testimony, or with the acts and constitutions of this church agreeable thereto? Nay, they have never once pretended so much as to examine them by the rule; but they have condemned them summarily for their secession, and for their declinature in bulk: If this is agreeable to Protestant principles, let the world judge. Can they give an instance of it, in any well constitute ecclesiastical court, where their power and authority has been declined, and grounds and reasons offered for the same, and yet that the court have not particularly examined the grounds and reasons of such declinature, and offered their reasons from the word of God for taking off the force of the same? So did the synod of Dort, in the case of the remonstrants; and so will every synod do, who binds not up the consciences of church-members to give implicate faith to their decisions. I am informed, that, at the late pretended assembly, some of the

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members pled, that the grounds of the seceding ministers declinature or secession might be enquired into and examined, and that this was absolutely refused: Whether this was so or not, I am sure that a demand of this kind was both just and reasonable; but, if the assembly had impartially examined the facts and deeds objected unto them by the associate presbytery in their act and declinature, the deeds of the present judicatories could not have born the light, they could not have born the trial of the Lord's word, nor of the acts and constitutions of this church agreeable thereunto. When the seceding ministers published their testimonies both first and second, the judicatories might have pled for themselves, that they were not concerned with such papers, which were never laid before them in judgment: But now they are without excuse; they have had a short summary of the grounds of our secession read in open court before the late pretended assembly, and put into the hands of their moderator; but as they have never once examined the same, nor offered the least answer unto the facts objected unto them, nor any thing from the word of God, or constitutions of this church, to take off the force and weight of the reasonings contained in the presbytery's act and declinature, therefore I may justly conclude, that all the thinking part of mankind, that are not under the same wilful prejudice and bias with Mr. Currie and his pretended assemblies and commissions, will acknowledge that I have just reason to say, That the late pretended assembly have deposed the seceding ministers by their mere arbitrary will and pleasure, or they have deposed them because they would have them deposed.

2dly, The above mentioned act and deed against the seceding ministers is laid in ambiguous terms; in regard they prohibit and discharge the said ministers, and every one of them, to exercise the office of the ministry, or any part thereof, within this church, in all time coming. Tho' they pretend to depose them in the name of the Lord Jesus, yet they do not absolutely prohibit them the exercise of the ministerial office; but they do prohibit and discharge them to exercise the same, only, within this church. By the words of the assembly, *within this church*, may be either meant, within the bounds of this national church, that is, within Scotland; and in this sense of their words, the seceding ministers may warrantably and lawfully exercise their ministry any where else, tho' this assembly pretend to depose them from their office in

the name of the Lord : Or, by the term, *within this church*, may be meant, within that which is called the established church; that is, they are discharged the exercise of their ministry, as ministers of the established church of Scotland; and, if this is the meaning of the assembly's words, then the seceding ministers have never since their secession disputed this point with the judicatories; they have never reckoned themselves ministers of what is called the established church, since the time that they declared their secession from ecclesiastical communion with the present judicatories: Yea, they may justly reckon, upon all the grounds and reasons I have given in this section, that, under the shadow of that which is called the legal or civil establishment, the present judicatories are departing from, and treading down, our reformed and covenanted principles; whereby the legal establishment is become a snare unto them, and, tho' good in itself to a church when rightly used, yet it is abused by the present judicatories, not only to the hurt and prejudice, but, if the Lord in his sovereign mercy do not prevent, to the subversion and total ruin of the once famous reforming and covenanting church of Scotland.

3dly, I observe, That tho' the pretended sentence of depolition is passed in the above arbitrary manner, and laid in the above ambiguous terms, yet they pretend to do it "in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, the sole King and Head of the church, and by vertue of the power and authority committed by him to them." Which, for the reasons I have given above against the said act, appears to me to be a public profanation of the great and holy name of our exalted Redeemer, who is *given to be Head over all things to his church which is his body*, and unto whom his Father has *given a name above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow*. The seceding ministers are warned to lay their account with such treatment; and they may comfort and encourage themselves, under it, from the words of the Lord, John xvi. 2. Luke vi. 22. Isa. lxvi. 5. It is not the first time that ecclesiastical judicatories have profaned and blasphemed that adorable name, by their tyrannical acts and sentences. The Antichristian church, that woman who is full of names of blasphemy, Rev. xvii. 3. does emit her acts and constitutions by the Pope, who pretends to be Christ's vicar on earth, in the name of the Lord Jesus, the sole King and Head of his church: Therefore the seceding ministers have not ground to be dismayed or discouraged, when corrupt ecclesiastical

courts separate them from their company, and reproach them, and cast out their names as evil for the Son of man's sake: And, when all this is pretended to be done in the name of the Lord, 'tis no new thing; *Your brethren that hated you, and cast you out for my name's sake, said, Let the Lord be glorified.*

I shall only further observe, That the above deed of the late pretended assembly is, on the part of the present judicatories, a doing what in them lies, in their ecclesiastical capacity, to bury a testimony for Christ in Scotland. Their present testimony, on the part of the seceding ministers and their adherents, is their public confession of the truth held forth from the word of God in our Confession of Faith, in opposition unto these dangerous errors that have sprung up in this perilous day wherein we live: It is their confession of the order, government and discipline of our Lord's house, of the rights of his spiritual, free and independent kingdom, as also of the liberties of his subjects, in opposition unto the violence and injuries, the dishonours and indignities that have been done the same, both in former and present times. What have the judicatories done? They pretend to depose the seceding ministers: I do not compare myself with any of them, nay, I do not think myself worthy to be named amongst witnesses for Christ; but the deed of the late pretended assembly is in itself an ecclesiastical killing and slaying of the witnesses, and a burying their testimony: I pray the judicatories may see the evil of it, that this iniquity and wickedness may not be laid to their charge.

The last instance I give of tyranny in the administration is the conduct of the late pretended assembly, upon passing their extraordinary sentence against the seceding ministers. As I observed above, they appointed their moderator to write letters with copies of their sentence to the magistrates of the several burghs concerned: this was done with an evident design to stir up the magistrates against their ministers: It was also execute without delay; the sentence is passed upon Thursday 15th of May, and, before or upon the ensuing Lord's day, the moderator's letters came to the magistrates of the respective burghs. The magistrates of Stirling, in obedience to the assembly's sentence, discharged the church-bells to be rung for convening the people to worship; they likewise commanded the church and church-yard doors to be lock'd against their faithful minister the reverend Mr. Ebenezer Erskine, whom they had unanimously called to labour

in the work of the ministry amongst them; whereby they served themselves heirs to the iniquity and wickedness of some of their forefathers in that place, who stoned that eminent seer in his day, and faithful martyr, Mr. James Guthrie. Likewise, the magistrates of Perth, having received the moderator's letter upon the Sabbath morning, sustained themselves executioners of the assembly's sentence against their minister, who, according to the measure of grace given him, had laboured near twenty four years in the work of the ministry amongst them, and who was also unanimously called to that work by the people of that congregation: The said magistrates themselves came to guard the church doors, and, when they saw their minister coming, shut the doors upon him; whereupon one Mr. John Haly then a probationer, employed by Mr. David Black to preach that day; being attended by the said Mr. Black, was with the assistance of the magistrates thrust into his pulpit. I pray the Lord may give them repentance for, and the forgiveness of, their iniquity, and that it may not be laid to their charge, nor to the charge of that place. As for the rest of the seceding ministers, they do as yet possess their churches, except the reverend Mr. Nairn minister at Abbotshall, the heritors of that parish having at their own hands, sometime in the month of October last, locked the church and churchyard doors, and nailed iron plates on the key-holes of the said doors. The conduct of the judicatories, in stirring up the civil powers against the seceding ministers, is not unlike the tyranny of the church of Rome, who first condemn the Protestants as heretics, and then deliver them up to the secular powers to be prosecuted and punished, as if they were the grossest criminals and malefactors. Upon the whole, It is matter of mourning and lamentation, that, in the once reforming and covenanting church of Scotland, judicatories that call themselves Presbyterian, should after this manner prosecute and persecute ministers, who are endeavouring to bear testimony to our reformed and covenanted principles: Ah! that it should be told in Gath, and published in the streets of Askelon, to the laughter and joy of these that are open and declared enemies of our reformation rights and principles! However, all the well-wishers and true friends of Zion may encourage themselves in this, that the Lord *will yet arise and have mercy upon Zion, and that, when he builds up Zion, he will appear in his glory.*

From the several instances I have given of the tyranny of

the present judicatories in the administration, is evident to me that this national church, as she is represented in her present judicatories, has not a claim to the above-mentioned character of a true church, given in the 18th article of our first Confession of Faith, and in the other Confessions of the reformed churches: And that, tho' her outward form is Presbyterian, yet she is not a whit better than if her form and mode were Prelatical; in regard she exerciseth a lordly and magisterial power over the heritage of God, in the several instances which I have given; her present judicatories rule the flock of Christ with rigour; they are guilty of such violence and oppression upon the heritage of God, as Mr. Currie in his *Jus Divinum* calls impious robbery, sacrilege and rapine; they are, in the instances above given, perverting the keys of government and discipline; they are so far from exercising them for the edification of the body of Christ, that they are exercised for their destruction; they are not gathering but scattering the sheep of Christ; and, in the several instances above mentioned, they are walking quite contrary to the end and design of their erection and constitution in the church, which is mainly and chiefly for the honour and glory of the exalted head, for the edification of the body of Christ, for the redress of their grievances, for the preservation of the institutions of Christ in their purity, for maintaining that liberty wherewith Christ hath made his people free, and for purging the church of such errors or erroneous persons whereby the whole body is in danger to be leavened: But, instead of answering these valuable ends, the present judicatories have let the erroneous go without censure, or with no censure proportioned to the scandal they have given; they have cast out of their communion, they have suspended and deposed ministers, against whom they have not, nor cannot bring the charge of error in doctrine, or immorality in practice; they have spoiled the flock of Christ of that liberty wherewith Christ the Head hath made them free; they neglect and despise the petitions and representations of church-members for the redress of grievances; and they shew no evidences, to this day, of repentance for their tyranny in the above and like instances, nor of a disposition to reform their violence: By all which, they have so far forfeited their claim to the exercise of the keys, that the same devolves upon the smaller part, who desire to cleave to our reformed, Presbyterian and covenanted principles. From the observes that I have made above, upon the instances of tyranny mentioned in the De-

fence,

sence, the reader may see, that Mr. Currie has never entred into the argument; and that my argument, as it is stated upon the head of tyranny, stands good, notwithstanding of what is advanced by Mr. Currie. And, when the above instances of tyrannical proceedings of the two late pretended general assemblies are subjoined, the argument comes out with new force and evidence; if a judicial killing and slaying witnesses for the truth, can be sustained as instances of ecclesiastical tyranny. And when all the instances of tyranny are put together, and especially when it is considered that the judicatories continue impenitent and obstinate in their sin, every unprejudiced person may see, that the present judicatories are not only guilty of some acts of tyranny, but of habitual tyranny in the administration.

S E C T. III.

Whether or not Intruders, or such as are imposed upon dissenting and reclaiming Congregations, ought to be received by the Church, as lawful and sent Ministers of Christ.

ONE of the characters of a true church, given us in the 18th article of our first Confession of Faith, is, *The right administration of the sacraments of Jesus Christ, which must be annexed to the word and promise of God, to seal and confirm the same in our hearts.* Upon this Mr. Currie in his Essay, p. 3. tells us, "None can object against this, that the seals of God's covenant are as purely administered in this church, as ever they were in any." Yet I have objected against this, and I have affirmed, that Mr. Currie might have spared, or at least he ought to have qualified, his above confident boast. And I have given my grounds and reasons for saying so, first in the postscript to my printed Letter, p. 30. and afterwards, Def. Chap. 2. Sect. 3. where I observed, Our reforming fathers, in the 22d article of the said Confession, teach, That two things are requisite to the right ministration of the sacraments. The one is, "That they be ministered by lawful ministers, whom they affirm to be only such as are appointed to the preaching of the word — they being men lawfully chosen thereto by some church:" The other requisite is, "That they be ministered in such sort and such elements as God has appointed, &c." And, Def. p. 119. I observe, that

that we may learn from the fourth head of the first book of Discipline, compared with head twentieth, what they mean by men *lawfully chosen* to the work of the ministry, namely, such as are chosen by the flock and heritage of God, to take the charge and oversight of their souls. And from the above words of our Confession I conclude in my postscript, that Mr. Currie cannot refuse that there are many intruded into the holy ministry, being men that were never lawfully chosen thereto by any church; and that, according to the forefaid Confession, they are not *lawful* ministers, &c. Mr. Currie, in his Short Vindication, makes the following exception to my above argument, viz. That our first Confession makes only two things requisite to the right ministrations of the sacraments: The first is, That men be lawfully chosen to the work of the gospel by some church or *judicatory thereof*; for, by church, a presbytery, or ministers, the church representative, says he, is meant. Upon this I observe, Def. p. 120. That Mr. Currie, in the above words, makes an addition to the Confession of Faith; in regard that, whereas the Confession, in giving the characters of lawful ministers, makes this one, They being men *lawfully chosen* to the work of the ministry by some church, Mr. Currie thinks fit to add, *or judicatory thereof*; but the Confession says no such thing. Here Mr. Currie, Vind. p. 122. flies out after his usual manner in a charge and accusation of slandering him; and, to vindicate himself from the charge I lay against him of adding to our Confession, he says, He gave it as a Commentary upon the words of the Confession; that by church there he understands church judicatories, as a presbytery, the church representative. But, if passion or prejudice had not overcome him, he might have seen, that I take up his words in the very way in which he says he understands them; and therefore I tell him, That the word church is nowhere taken in our Confession for the church representative: I add, That the word church, in the place quoted, cannot be taken in Mr. Currie's sense; "Because the Confession speaks of the election, and not of the ordination, of ministers. To chuse and ordain are quite different things, and have as different meanings as they have different letters, syllables and sounds" Mr. Currie, after a quotation from Mr. Rutherford, quite foreign to the present purpose, and which I shall consider by and by, tells his reader, That the word church is sometimes taken in scripture for the church representative. What then? Does

therefore follow, that it is so taken in this place of the Confession of Faith? Mr. Currie knows very well, that the word church is frequently taken in scripture for the collective church, and so it is taken in our Confession. And, if Mr. Currie had spoke to the purpose, he should have made a reply to my above reasons, and to others which I advance, to prove that the word church is not nor cannot be taken in our Confession of Faith for the church-representative: But he passes them all over without any answer unto them; and I leave it to the impartial reader to judge if I have slandered him, when I say, He makes an addition to the Confession of Faith, by forcing a sense upon them which the words do not nor cannot bear, in this place of our Confession.

Mr. Currie thinks fit in his Vind. p. 121. 126. to accuse me of error, unsoundness, and manifest contrariety to the sentiments of orthodox divines upon the present question: And therefore I shall lay down my principles as they are stated in my Defence; and then I shall enquire into the reasons that are alledged by Mr. Currie, or *some others for him*, for proof of the grievous charge he brings against me. I affirm, in the first place, That such as are intruded upon Christian congregations, or who are settled in opposition to the dissenting and reclaiming heritage of God, as they run unsent to the work of the Lord, so they ought not to be acknowledged by the church as her lawful ministers; or, to use Mr. Currie's words in his preface to his Jus Div. p. 4. Such as are *impious robbers*, and guilty of *rapine and sacrilege*, are not lawful ministers of Christ: And hence I conclude, that the administration of gospel-ordinances by such as are intruders, or who run unsent, wants that purity and rectitude which the divine institution requires. As these are my principles, so I reckon that I am supported in them by the above-quoted article of our Confession of Faith. Mr. Currie tells me, That the question betwixt him and me is not so much about the meaning of our Confession, as about what he takes to be my doctrine upon this head; but as I am satisfied that the doctrine of our Confession is the doctrine of all our reformed divines agreeable to the word of God, so I teach no other doctrine in my Defence, but that which is laid down in the above 22d article of our first Confession, if the words are understood in their plain and obvious meaning, as I have shown in the Defence.

And, for setting the question betwixt Mr. Currie and me
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in some further light, I hope he will not dispute it with me that a lawful calling to the work and office of the holy ministry is needful to denominate one a lawful minister of Christ and that we are taught in our first book of Discipline, head 4. and in our second book of Discipline, parag. 6. That a lawful vocation to the ministry, and that an ordinary outward calling unto any office ecclesiastical, hath these two special parts, *election* and *ordination*: I suppose likewise, that Mr Currie will not refuse it, that our first book of Discipline expressly affirms, That it appertaineth to the people, and to every several congregation, to elect their minister; neither will he refuse, that the second book of Discipline gives at least a full negative to the congregation over the eldership in the election of a minister: Therefore it is plain from our books of Discipline, that, when a man is settled over a dissenting and reclaiming congregation, one thing at least is wanting, which the said books of Discipline affirm, is necessary in ordinary cases unto a lawful vocation unto the holy ministry, namely, the election, call or consent of the congregation. I shall here transcribe a few observations from Apollonius, which I judge may serve to clear and illustrate this matter; and, since Mr Currie sometimes commends him as a learned author, I hope his judgment will have some weight with him. In his Book, intituled, *A consideration of certain controversies agitated in the kingdom of England, &c. Engl. Translat. p. 46.* says he, "When we consider of a pastor's calling entirely and absolutely, and not in reference to some part of it, by it is the whole derivation of ecclesiastical right on this or that person performed: And thus it comprehendeth *election* and *ordination*." The same author observes, p. 57. That there is a liberty of nomination or election allowed by the word of God to all the members in a church, so as no minister may without the agreement and consent of the people be obtruded upon a church whether they will or not. And he very well adds, "Which nomination or election doth not yet confer ministerial power on the person elected, but only designeth a person on whom it may be duly derived, according to the instituted rule, by those who have under Christ received that power whereby ecclesiastical authority is derived on this or that person." This learned author does very well express the doctrine contained in my Defence, namely, That a calling to the pastoral office, considered absolutely and entirely, includes *election* and *ordination*: Tho' election doth

not confer ministerial power and authority, yet it designeth the person on whom it may be duly derived, according to the Lord's institution; hence, when one is ordained to the office of the ministry, by whomsoever he is ordained, if he has not the call or consent of the flock of Christ, he enters not in by that door by which the Head of the church will have all that bear office in his house to enter into their several ecclesiastical offices. I have Mr. Currie's Testimony to this purpose, in his *Jus Populi Divinum*, p. 109. where he says "Where ministers have entred by calls from the majority of heritors and elders, while the body or major part of the Lord's people have been averse from and opposed the settlement, their entrance hath been by the wrong door." Yea, such who have entred into the office of the ministry in the manner mentioned, have run unsent; as Mr. Currie likewise in the same place tells us from Mr. Park against patronages, p. 141. His words are, "Where ministers have not had the voluntary consent of the church and people concerned, I see not how they could have been free from the guilt of having run unsent." I may therefore justly conclude, that those who enter not in by the door, but climb up some other way, or who run unsent, are not lawful and sent ministers of Christ; neither is the church obliged to receive or acknowledge them as such, while they justify their iniquity, and give no evidence of their repentance for the scandal and offence which they have given.

This leads me to the other thing asserted in my Defence, which Mr. Currie exclaims against as erroneous and unsound, namely, That when ordinances are dispensed in the church by such as have not entred in by the door, or by such as have run unsent unto the office of the holy ministry, their ministrations want that purity and rectitude that the divine institution requires. This appears to me to be a just and native conclusion from the former head; in regard that, in order to the purity of the dispensation of gospel ordinances, the divine institution requires, not only that gospel ministrations with respect to both word and sacraments be agreeable to the word of God as to the matter of them, but also that they be dispensed by such as have a lawful calling to such ministrations; for, *How shall they preach except they be sent?* Rom. x. 15.

The above are the principles which I maintain, and which Mr. Currie charges with error and unsoundness. I shall therefore enquire, how he supports the charge he brings against

against me. He alledges in the first place, Vind. p. 128. That I go in with the principle of the Independents, who, in their Confession of Faith drawn up at the Savoy, affirm, " They do not allow that ordination to the work of the ministry, tho' it be by persons rightly ordained, does convey any office-power without a previous election of the church, &c. But this is none of my principles; for I allow that ordination conveys office power without any previous election, tho' I also affirm that previous election is in ordinary cases the instituted door of entrance into any ecclesiastical office, as to the due exercise thereof; and that such who enter not in by this door, but climb up some other way, are, according to Mr. Currie himself, *Thieves and robbers*. Mr. Currie adds, That at the Westminster assembly the Independents entered their dissent against any ordinations previous to persons being elected by some church, according to Neal's Hist. Vol. 3d, p. 130. But the question upon which the Independents entered their dissent, according to the said Historian, was as follows: " Whether certain ministers of this city may not be appointed to ordain ministers in the city and neighbourhood, *for a certain time, jure fraternitatis?*" But as the above question plainly respects extraordinary cases, so I told Mr. Currie, Def. p. 124. that extraordinary cases fall not under the present question, and therefore the Independents mentioned did dissent without any just ground or foundation.

Mr. Currie alledges in the next place, That I have not taken the least notice of something advanced by him in his Short Vindication: And, because Mr. Currie seems to lay very much stress and weight upon it, I shall now take notice of it. It is as follows; " Tho' some men have been intruded upon Christian congregations, that will not prove the sacraments, or the seals of the covenant, cannot be purely dispensed by them, or their administrations invalid. Don't such men baptize, and administer the sacrament of the Lord's supper, in the same manner that others do, without all mixture of will-worship or human invention? And, have they not authority for this by their ordination supposed essentially valid?" To which I reply, That I observed in Def. p. 121. That Mr. Currie confounds two things quite distinct, namely the question about the purity of the administration of ordinances, and another about their validity. Our first Confession of Faith refuses that the sacraments were rightly ministered in the Popish church, not only because they were

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adulterate, but also because their ministers were no *ministers of Christ Jesus*; and yet they never refused the validity of Popish baptism. But it is the latter part of Mr. Currie's above quotation upon which I judge he lays most stress, which is laid by way of query, which no doubt he thinks very pungent; have they not, says he, (to wit, intruders) authority for this (to wit, the administration of ordinances) *by their ordination supposed essentially valid*? It is evident from the said words, that Mr. Currie's doctrine upon the point in question is, That ordination supposed *essentially valid* makes men lawful and sent ministers of Christ; consequently, Jesuite priests, and the whole of the Antichristian clergy, are lawful and sent ministers of Christ, because their ordination is *essentially valid*: But this doctrine advanced by Mr. Currie is erroneous and unsound, and contrary to the doctrine of the reformed churches, as it is laid down in our Confession of Faith, where it is expressly and justly affirmed, That the *ministers of the Popish church are no ministers of Christ Jesus*. Likewise, according to Mr. Currie, not only Jesuite priests, but also intruders, Simoniacs, or these that have entered to the holy ministry by Simoniac practices, must all be held and acknowledged as lawful and sent ministers of Christ Jesus. If a man is ordained, or if he is in orders (as they speak) by whomsoever he enter, whether by the Pope, the Prelate, or the presbytery; and by whatsoever way he enter, whether by intrusion or simony; he must, according to Mr. Currie's reasonings, be held and acknowledged as a lawful and sent minister of Jesus Christ.

Mr. Currie, to prove that I am unsound, as he alledges, and to support his own corrupt doctrine, appeals to several eminent and worthy divines; such as, Rutherford, Gillespie, Hudson, &c. He tells us from Rutherford's Peaceable Plea, p. 264. "It is the ordination of a pastor which makes one essentially a minister; election does only appropriate a man's ministry to a people." And, Vind. 126. he says, It is manifest that my doctrine upon this head is unsound, erroneous, and contrary to the sentiments of orthodox divines, "from what the famous Rutherford says in his *due right of presbytery*, p. 237, 238." where 'tis said, "Tho' Luther and Zwinglius had their whole calling from the Pope and his clergy, yet think we not that calling no calling, but it hath that which essentially constitutes a minister, &c."

As to all Mr. Currie's authorities, I reply in the following observations; *first*, That it is truth, which is affirmed by

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Mr. Rutherford and other reformed divines, that election does not invest any in the ministerial office; this is the act and deed of the presbytery, whereby, after due examination and trial, and previous election in ordinary cases, one is separated and set apart by fasting and prayer unto that holy function; which is usually attended with the outward sign and ceremony of *imposition of hands*, according to scripture pattern and example, Tim. iv. 14. *2dly*, Ordination in the church of Rome is so far valid, that such as are ordained in that church ought not to be re ordained, when they relinquish the errors and abominations of Popery, more as such that are baptized in the church ought to be re-baptized. *3dly*, Tho' Popish priests in the case fore said ought not to be re ordained, yet it is not upon the account of Rome's vain pretence to the uninterrupted succession of her ministers; I hope Mr. Currie is not so far off of the way as to plead this: But the ministers of the church of Rome are reckoned essentially ministers, in the same manner that Mr. Rutherford and our reformed divines call Rome essentially a church, and a true church. See Rutherford's Peaceable Plea, p 125, 127, 128, 129. And they reckon Rome essentially a church, in so far as she maintains, by visible profession, some of the essential articles of Christianity; such as a Trinity of Persons in the unity of the divine essence, the incarnation of the Son of God, his true Deity, the real distinction of his natures, the unity of his Person, according as the faith of the church was professed in the first four general councils. Yet, *4thly*, Tho' the church of Rome is called in the above respects essentially a church, and tho' her ministers are called essentially ministers; yet Rome, considered as apostate and degenerate from the true Christian profession and faith, both in doctrine, worship and government, is an Antichristian church; her ministers, according to our Confession, are not ministers of Christ Jesus; their Antichristian calling is no calling as Mr. Rutherford speaks: And in the place above quoted (Due Right, p. 238) tho' he owns them to be essentially ministers, and adduces the example of Cajaphas the high priest to this purpose; yet he affirms, That "we are nowhere forbidden in God's word to hear teachers sent and called, but only wolves in sheep skins, void of all calling, and intruders." These are Mr. Rutherford's words, and they go immediately before one of Mr. Currie's quotations from Mr. Rutherford, Vind. p. 136. but Mr. Currie thinks it fit to slip it over: However, 'tis plain from

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Mr. Rutherford's above words, that such are not to be acknowledged by the church as her lawful and sent ministers, who are wolves in sheeps clothing, as all the missionaries of Rome are; neither such as are void of all calling (and, according to Mr. Rutherford, Rome's ministers, in respect of their Antichristian calling, have no calling) nor yet, according to the same learned divine, are intruders to be owned and acknowledged as teachers sent and called. 5thly, I observe with Mr. Hudson, upon the unity of the Catholic church, p. 138. who is quoted by Mr. Currie in his Vindication, p. 127. *That ordination gives one an habitual power of the ministry.* And Mr. Hudson in the same place observes from another divine, "That all ministers are ministers *habitu et potestate*, wherever they are; but they are only ministers *actu et quoad legitimum exercitium*, i. e. actually, and with respect to the lawful exercise of their office, where they have a lawful mission and calling." And to apply this observation, I own that the ministers of the church of Rome, intruders, &c. have an habitual power to exercise the office of the ministry, and may warrantably exercise it as lawful and sent ministers of Christ, upon their relinquishing their Popish errors and Antichristian calling, or giving evidences of their sincere repentance for their sinful intrusions into the office of the holy ministry, for removing the scandal and offence that they have given to the church of God; but while the Popish priest justifies his conjunction with Rome, and while the intruder justifies his iniquity, none of them can warrantably exercise the office of the ministry as lawful and sent ministers of Christ.

According to the observation immediately preceeding, I affirm, Def. p. 125. That when Luther was a blind Popish monk, and when Mr. Henderson was a Prelatic intruder, the church was not obliged to receive any of them as her lawful or sent ministers; but when the first was converted from the abominations of Popery, and the other from his Prelatical course and way, then both of them might and ought to be received by the church as her lawful and sent ministers. Mr. Currie, Vind. p. 135. says, "Now, according to this doctrine, converting grace will make one a lawful minister who was not one before, so as the sacraments administered by him shall be right sacraments of Jesus Christ which were not so before; and the minister's having converting grace will add to the purity of the ordinances dispensed by him." To which I reply, That Mr. Currie's inferences

are so wide, that I am not afraid to say, That they have no right reason nor sound divinity in them. His argument must run to the following purpose; Jesuit priests, intruders and Simoniacs, before they can be held and reputed lawful and sent ministers of Christ, must remove the scandal and offence they have given to the church, by some evidences of sincere repentance; therefore converting grace will make one a lawful minister who was not one before: Mr. Currie might with as much reason have said, A church member, who upon the account of scandal is cast out of the church's communion, cannot be received into full communion with the church, until he give satisfying evidences of his sincere repentance; therefore converting grace is necessary to make one to be held and reputed as a member of the visible church. But Mr. Currie very well knows, that it is the credible evidences that one gives of his repentance in the case mentioned, which give him a right to full communion with the visible church in all her ordinances. And in like manner I affirm, that the credible evidences that the Jesuit priest, the intruder and Simoniac, give of their repentance of the error of their way, or their corrupt and scandalous entries into the office of the ministry; it is this, I say, which removes the scandal, and gives them a right and title to the exercise of their ministry as lawful and sent ministers of Christ, and which obliges the church to receive and acknowledge them as such. And tho' ordinances dispensed by ministers that are scandalous and corrupt are valid in so far as they are the ordinances of God, yet, as they are dispensed by ministers that are notoriously scandalous and corrupt, they want that purity and rectitude in the manner of administration which the divine institution requires.

Upon the head, of the purity and rectitude of the administration of gospel ordinances, I have still considered the question about their validity, and the other about the purity of their administration, as quite distinct: And therefore I told Mr. Currie, That tho' our reformers reckoned that the Popish ministers were not ministers of Christ, and that the sacraments ministered by them were not right sacraments of Jesus Christ as is plain from the words of the Confession above quoted yet they never re-baptized any that were baptized in the church of Rome, because she professed the doctrine of the holy Trinity, and because baptism is administered in that adorable name; as also, some other essential articles of Christianity and

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held in that church by outward visible profession. Upon this Mr. Currie alledges, Vind. p. 124. "That I should have told, it was also because our reformers look'd upon Rome's ministers to have that which was essential to the being of ministers, for all their corrupt way of entering into the ministry." But I do not think I should have added any such thing, and that because our reformed divines account for the validity of Popish baptism in the same manner as I do; and, if Mr. Currie pleases, he may consult Calvin's Instit. Book 4. Cap. 15. Sect. 16. and Sect. 20. Mr. Currie will find in the last-named section, that tho' Calvin justly condemns Laic baptism, yet he tells, That as great a man as Augustine doubted if such as were baptised by Laics ought to be re-baptised; and Calvin does not determine in the question: And Mr. Currie might have known that our reformed divines have not been very forward to determine in it. Again, I do not think I should have spoke the truth, if I had said, That the Popish ministers have that which is essential to the being of ministers; and that because Mr. Currie's words do plainly import that ordination is essential to the being of ministers, which in my opinion is unsound and erroneous, and contrary to the sentiments of all our reformed divines. Tho' Mr. Rutherford, in the sense I have above-declared, says, Ordination makes one essentially a minister, yet he no-where says that ordination is essential to the being of a minister. Neither can it be said that ordination is essential to the being of a minister, and that because, if it is essential to the being of a minister, none can in any case be a minister of Christ without it: But Mr. Currie himself teacheth the contrary doctrine, in his *Jur. Pop. Div.* p. 162. where he says, "That such is the people's interest in the election of their pastors, that their bare election is enough to make one a minister of Christ, where ordination cannot be had according to his institution." Again, if ordination is essential to the being of a minister, then many of our reformers were not ministers of Christ, and, with them, that great man Mr. Robert Bruce, who entered upon the full exercise of his ministry without ordination, was not a minister of Christ: But, tho' such extraordinary instances are not precedents for imitation in ordinary cases, yet I doubt not to affirm, that Mr. Currie's above doctrine, That ordination is essential to the being of a minister, is unsound; and that it is contrary to the sentiments, and condemned by the practice of reformed divines; as also, That Mr. Currie in his

above assertion contradicts the doctrine taught by himself in his *Jus Populi*, when I humbly judge he wrote with more deliberation. I shall only add upon this head, That, according to the doctrine taught by Mr. Currie in this part of his *Vindication*, Jesuit priests, yea, the whole of the Antichristian clergy, together with intruders and Simoniacs, must be held and acknowledged by the church as her lawful and sent ministers, because they have ordination, which is supposed to be essentially valid. But this, for the reasons I have given, appears to me to be erroneous and unsound, and contrary to the sentiments of the reformed churches, as the same are well expressed in the above quoted article of our Confession. The reason why I have mentioned Simoniacs is, Because I doubt if Mr. Currie can purge the present intruders in Scotland of Simoniacal entries: One thing is notour, that a considerable sum must be paid, as the common fees, for royal presentations passing the seals; Mr. Currie may try if he can free this practice of Simony.

My reasonings upon the present head are concluded with two questions, which I put to Mr. Currie, Def. p. 126. The first is, Whether or not such as are intruded into the office of the ministry, or who are appointed ministers over dissenting and reclaiming congregations, should be received and acknowledged by the church as lawful and sent ministers of Christ, while they justify their intrusions, and give no evidences of sincere repentance for the same? Unto the above question Mr. Currie makes the following answer, *Vind. p. 128. They may be acknowledged as ministers of the catholic church of Christ, but I cannot look on them as the lawful ministers of that congregation, where the body of the Christian people have justly and upon sufficient grounds opposed their settlements: Their want of repentance may flow from want of conviction of their sin; and they may be acknowledged as the lawful ministers of such in that congregation as have called them.*

Mr. Currie's answer to my question gives me occasion to make the following observes, 1st, I grant that want of repentance in intruders may flow from their want of a conviction of their sin; But, will Mr. Currie say, that their want of this conviction does arise from their want of sufficient means of light for that end? Or, does Mr. Currie think, when intruders are not sensible of their sin, that their blindness or stupidity is sufficient to remove the scandal and offence they have given by their corrupt entries into the ministry? If this is Mr. Currie's doctrine, let him tell it

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ont plainly, and then I will be in no strait to prove that he is likewise unsound and erroneous in this particular. *2dly*, According to Mr. Currie's above answer, an intruder may be acknowledged a minister of the catholic church, when yet he owns he cannot look upon him as the lawful minister of that congregation into which he is intruded. But I ask Mr. Currie, Why he cannot look upon him as a lawful minister of that congregation? Mr. Currie must answer, according to his above words, It is because the body of the Christian people have upon sufficient grounds opposed his settlement. If I should ask Mr. Currie further, Is not the presbytery's authority, appointing him minister of that congregation, sufficient to make him their lawful minister? Mr. Currie must still answer in the negative, for his reasons above given. But I ask again, Why does not the presbytery's authority, interposed in this matter, make the intruder the lawful minister of this particular congregation? For my part, I humbly judge, it is because the laws and institutions of the Head of the church are counteracted, it is because the covenant of Levi is corrupted in this particular instance, and consequently the intruder has given just ground of offence to the church by his manner of entry into the holy ministry. *3dly*, Is not every particular visible church a part of the catholic body? Or, does not every particular church stand in relation to the catholic, as a part unto the whole? Hence a scandalous entry into the holy ministry, not only affects that particular congregation into which one is intruded, but also the whole catholic body; unless Mr. Currie will say, that the transgressing of the laws and institutions of Christ may be just ground of scandal and offence to one part of the body, and not to the whole; and, if he says so, I affirm he overthrows the unity of the catholic church, and consequently that he is unsound in this particular also. And therefore, for the above reasons, when Mr. Currie tells his reader, that an intruder may be a lawful minister of the catholic church, and yet not a lawful minister of that congregation; as I humbly judge this is a new-coined distinction, so the design and tendency of it is to blindfold and hoodwink simple well-meaning people and to bring them to a tame submission to the ministry of intruders, when a more particular and special testimony is lifted up at this time against the course of violence that is practised upon the Lord's heritage in Scotland. *4thly*, Mr. Currie in his above answer affirms, That intruders may be acknowledged " as the lawful ministers of such in that

"congregation as have called them;" that is, they may be acknowledged as lawful ministers to the patron, an heritor or two, or to a few of the congregation. This appears to me to be both new and inconsistent doctrine: Mr. Currie should have rather told his reader, that he gives up with our parochial order. Do not all our Presbyterian divines own that every parochial church is a particular visible church? And, are not intruders by the authority of the presbytery appointed ministers over that particular visible church? But according to Mr. Currie's doctrine, if the intruder be a lawful minister to such as have called him, then a patron, and two or three heritors, with a few in the congregation, make up a particular visible church: And consequently we must either have a particular visible church within a particular visible church; or else such as will not submit to the intruder as their lawful minister, must be reckoned renters and dividers of that particular church. This is indeed agreeable to the doctrine advanced by the *modest and humble inquirer and his fellows*, whose pen I conceive Mr. Currie has borrowed upon the present argument; but whether he is consistent with himself or with our Presbyterian principles, in his reasonings, I shall leave it to the reader to judge.

A second question which I put to Mr. Currie, Def. p. 126. is, Whether or not gospel-ordinances, dispensed by such as are neither lawful nor sent ministers of Christ, have that rectitude or purity in their administration which the divine institution requires? Unto which he answers Vind. p. 128. "I think, gospel-ordinances dispensed by such as are neither lawful nor sent ministers of Christ, and such as having usurped the office, without either the peoples call, or presbytery's ordination, may have the rectitude and purity, both as to the matter and outward form, which the divine institution requires; tho' I do not think their administrations are valid, wanting the presbytery's ordination, which in my opinion, in ordinary cases, is absolutely needful to constitute one a lawful minister of Christ."

As to Mr. Currie's above answer, I grant him, that ordinances dispensed by intruders and usurpers of the ministerial office may have a rectitude and purity as to the matter; but then, I refuse that they have that rectitude and purity as to the outward form which the divine institution requires; and my reason is, That tho' I cannot conceive what Mr. Currie understands by the terms outward form, yet, according to any understanding I have of the above terms as

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used in the present argument, I humbly judge, that a lawful vocation unto the work of the ministry is requisite unto the outward form, and so unto the pure administration of gospel-ordinances: And therefore, tho' a man should deliver sound doctrine, tho' he should dispense the sacraments without any mixture of human inventions, if he has not the ordinary outward call, his administrations want that purity and rectitude, as to their outward form, which the divine institution requires. Such men who want the ordinary outward call, they run unsent; and *no man ought to take this honour unto himself, but he that is called of God, as was Aaron.* And whereas Mr. Currie affirms, That the administrations of intruders, &c. are not valid if they want the presbytery's ordination. He appears to me in this to be unsound likewise, and that because the word *presbytery* import a college of presbyters; but our reformed divines have always sustained the administrations of such to be valid, who have been ordained by one single man: As for instance, the administrations of such as are ordained by the diocesan bishop are still sustained as valid, tho' I think they have not that purity and rectitude as to their outward form which the divine institution requires, while they justify their corrupt manner of entering the holy ministry: And altho' I am of opinion, that the presbytery's ordination is needful, in ordinary cases, to constitute one a lawful minister of Christ; yet I will not say it is absolutely needful to render the administrations valid: I doubt if Mr Currie himself will reckon the administrations of such of the Sectarian party invalid, who content themselves with election, and refuse the presbytery's ordination to the office of ministry.

As for the case of Mr. Whitefield, and others in the church of England, who, says he, never had such a call as Mr. Wilson requires; I answer, There is a vast difference, as I have already observed, betwixt ordinary cases and extraordinary, as that of Mr. Whitefield's appears to be: Also, there is a great difference betwixt the case of such who are pointing towards reformation, and that of others who are settled upon their lees, and refuse to be reformed. Mr. Whitefield gives satisfying evidences to the churches of Christ, that he lies open to light, and is pointing towards reformation: And may the Lord, who I hope has shined into his soul, and given him some clear discoveries of the doctrines of justification and salvation by the free grace of God, through the imputed righteousness of our Lord Jesus, enlighten him more and more; and particularly, with respect

to the worship, order and government of the house of God, the spiritual kingdom of our glorious Immanuel, whose peculiar prerogative it is, to give laws, ordinances and officers to his own house, as also instructions and directions with respect to the manner of their entry to their respective offices.

Mr. Currie thinks fit in the foresaid page to put the following question unto me, "Whether could one be a lawful minister of Jesus Christ, and administrate sacraments so as they shall be right sacraments, albeit he had accepted of a call, where there were only heritors and elders; a third part of the people with a majority of the presbytery for his ordination and settlement in that parish?" To which I briefly answer, If, as the question supposes, the majority of the people are against his settlement, then, according to Mr. Currie in his *Jus Divinum* above-quoted, such an one enters by the wrong door, yea, he is not free of the guilt of running unsent. Mr. Currie adds, That he hopes I will not refuse, that one having special grace may labour under such an error as to think he might accept of a call in the manner mentioned. I answer, That I will not refuse this; but then I affirm, That men's state, whether gracious or not, is not the rule by which we are to determine the outward and ordinary lawful call to the holy ministry. As I do not reckon a gracious state essential to the being of a minister, so neither do I think that the supposition, that one is in a state of grace, does oblige the church to receive and acknowledge him as a lawful and sent minister of Christ, if he has not the ordinary outward call to the work and office of the ministry; and if Mr. Currie thinks that a man's ignorance of the error of his way, or his continuing in this ignorance, suppose he may be in a state of grace, is a sufficient warrant for the church to receive him as a lawful and sent minister, I must look upon this as another of his erroneous principles. I shall not question that some of the Jansenist ministers, who are more sound upon the doctrine of grace than the rest of the Popish clergy, may be in a gracious state; but yet I affirm, that, while they continue in conjunction with their Antichristian head, they ought not to be acknowledged by the church as lawful and sent ministers of Christ.

I conclude this subject, Def. p. 126 with a quotation from Mr. Durham, which Mr. Currie thinks nothing to the purpose: And why? Because, says he, "Intruders have at least the outward form of a call, and cannot be said

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to run unsent, when authorized by judicatories of Christ to preach the gospel, by which they are made ministers of the catholic church." Here again Mr. Currie contradicts himself; for according to Mr. Park's above words, which Mr. Currie quotes with approbation, intruders are not free of the guilt of having run unsent: And I have sufficiently proven above, that they have not that outward form of a call which divine institution requires. After Mr. Currie has thrust in the author of *Plain Reasons*, he accuses me of omitting some of Mr. Durham's words, by which (says he) the reader might have seen that Mr. Durham is plainly against me. But I refuse Mr. Currie's charge as unjust; and if he had dealt justly with me, and fairly with the reader, he ought to have told plainly what the words are which I have omitted: But Mr. Currie slips over a considerable part of the quotation from Mr. Durham, particularly when Mr. Durham tells us, That such are to be accounted to speak without God's commission, who have had a warrantable call to the ministry, yet "by palpable defection from the truth, and commission given them in that call, have forfeited their commission, and so are no more to be accounted ambassadors for Christ, or watchmen of his flock, than a watchman of the city is to be accounted an observer thereof, when he hath publicly made defection to the enemy, and taken on with them." I wish Mr. Currie may seriously consider the above words, which he reckons nothing to the purpose: For my part, I cannot but reckon such who, as Mr. Currie speaks, are guilty of impious robbery, sacrilege and rapine, and who refuse to confess the truths of Christ in opposition to the injuries and indignities that have been done the same, and who are guilty of an habitual series and tract of tyranny in the administration, and who continue to justify themselves in all these; I say, I cannot but reckon that such have made palpable defection from the truth, and the commission given them in their call, as is above express'd: And that this is the state of matters with the present judicatories, in their ecclesiastical capacity, I have already evinced in the two preceeding sections compared with the Defence.

I have insisted too long upon this head; but I thought it necessary, both for the information of such as are willing to receive light, and for the direction of the Lord's people in their practice in this cloudy and dark day. I shall endeavour more brevity on the following heads, because, if I should

should pursue Mr. Currie after the same manner in the question before me, I might soon exceed his voluminous Vindication.

S E C T. IV.

Wherein it is shown, that the present Judicatories continue in Course of Defection, and refuse to be reformed, tho' the ordinary Means have been used to reclaim them.

AS the argument for secession is laid in the beginning of this chapter, it is stated in the following manner: When a particular visible church do, in their ecclesiastical or judicative capacity, go on in a course of defection from reformation purity once attained unto, and will not be reformed, after the ordinary means have been used to reclaim them; then, and in this case, the minor part, tho' but very few in number, may yea, ought to depart from church-communion with the backsliding part; and such as are office-bearers may warrantably exercise the keys of government and discipline in a distinct capacity from the majority, who are the backsliding part. In order to illustrate the argument, it remains that I enquire a little into that branch of the same, wherein it is subsum'd. That the ordinary means have been used to reclaim the present judicatories from their proceeding in a course of defection, but that such means have been used in vain, and that they continue to go on in their backsliding course, in opposition to all the means that have been and are used to reclaim them.

In the historical narrative, which I give in my introduction to the Defence, I take notice of the particular means by which the judicatories were dealt with, to stop their course and to return to our reformation standards. I am not here to repeat what was said in the above-mentioned introduction, but only to notice, that, immediately before the secession was declared, they were dealt with, by a protestation for exoneration, entred before the assembly 1733, and likewise by the representations that were given in to the commission of the said assembly, at their meeting August thereafter. But, notwithstanding of these means, they persisted in their sinful course, they thrust out the protesting ministers from ecclesiastical communion with them; whereby they did upon the matter declare, that they would regard none of the means that were used for reclaiming them. The means

were used for healing them, but they would not be healed ;
 yea, they cast some of us out, because we used such means :
 Therefore we are obliged to leave them, and to go out from
 ecclesiastical communion with them. The testimony against
 them being now lifted up in a way of secession from them, it
 is another call given them to return to the Lord, to remem-
 ber from whence they have fallen, and to repent ; this call
 was intimate unto them in a very public and solemn manner,
 when the associate presbytery did read their act and de-
 claration in presence of the assembly 1739. But, if the pre-
 sent judicatories will still continue to justify themselves in
 their iniquities and backslidings, both we and the whole land
 have ground to fear, that a righteous and holy God may be
 provoked to say, *Shall not I visit for these things ?*

The above-mentioned protestation for exoneration bears,
 That the protesting ministers had a very great regard for the
 judicatories of this church : Therefore Mr. Currie argues,
 Ind. p. 157. That if the said ministers had a very great re-
 gard for the judicatories at that time, then there was no
 ground for secession from the established church when the
 said protestation was entred. But from what I have observed
 in the preceeding second chapter, and from what is hinted
 above, the judicious reader may see how little weight there
 is in Mr. Currie's argument. There is one thing that, Mr.
 Currie should observe, comes into the argument for secession
 from the present judicatories, and which he always slips over,
 and that is, Their obstinate refusal of all the means that were
 used to reclaim them ; which they did manifestly discover,
 in thrusting the protesting ministers out from them, merely
 for a protestation for exoneration, and their refusing to re-
 tract the same : And the judicatories have not to this day
 condemn'd this iniquity ; nay, so far from it, that the assem-
 bly 1734, in their remit to the synod of Perth, bind up the
 said synod from judging of the legality or formality of the
 proceedings of the judicatories in relation to the protesting
 ministers, and from approving or censuring the same.

Mr. Currie continues likewise to harp upon some expressi-
 ons contain'd in one of our representations given in to the
 commission August 1733. The expressions are ; " Why our
 mother's sons are so very angry with us, as to threaten to
 cast us out of the Lord's vineyard." Says Mr. Currie, If she
 was then the Lord's vineyard, notwithstanding of the act
 1733 and all her other faults, she is not worse now as she
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was then, Vind. p. 159. Such reasonings appear to me not to deserve any notice. I can safely say, The assembly 1741 have done what lies in their power to cast the seceding ministers out of the Lord's vineyard; yet it will never follow that, by saying so, I acknowledge the present judicatories to be lawful and right constitute courts of Christ.

Mr. Currie, from his above-mentioned or the like reasonings, tells his reader, Vind. p. 157. "That to him it is clear to a demonstration, that, for all the faults of the judicatories, the brethren had never thought of a secession, had not the assembly actually cast some of them out." Upon which I observe; To me it is very clear, that Mr. Currie is too daring and bold, when he determines that the brethren would never have thought upon a secession except in the event mentioned. I humbly judge, that to determine what mens thoughts would have been, or would not have been, upon any supposed event, is the prerogative of him who only knows all things *in himself* that are either possible or future. Altho' I will not take it upon me to determine what the thoughts of the brethren would have been, in case the event mentioned had not fallen out; yet I judge there was too much ground given for a secession from the present judicatories before the brethren were actually cast out, as I have observed in the introduction to the Defence. Likewise, I'll venture to say, That the ejection of the brethren, an event which came to such a narrow point as the moderator's casting vote, tho' in itself a very wicked and sinful deed, yet it has been, according to the wise counsel and purpose of him who worketh all things according to the counsel of his own will, and by his particular and adorable providence, overruled to such good ends and purposes, which it is very probable, neither the present judicatories nor the protesting ministers had thought upon; and, amongst others, it has brought help and relief to severals of the Lord's scattered flock and heritage thro' the land; it has likewise brought forth judicial testimony to Scotland's covenanted reformation, and against a manifest course of defection from the same.

Mr. Currie having in his Essay, p. 6. told his reader, That he hopes that the judicatories are not vastly worse since the year 1733, when the brethren entered their protestation for exoneration against the deed of assembly the said year: Therefore, Def. Chap. 2. Sect. 6. I give several instances to shew that, since the foresaid time, the judicatories by their proceedings and conduct are vastly worse; and that, instead of

shewing

showing a disposition for removing the grounds of secession, they do from time increase and strengthen the same. Two of the instances which I give did take place immediately after the foresaid protestation was entered; and the other instances which I give have taken place since the secession was declared. Since Mr. Currie makes some exceptions unto the instances which I give, I shall only take notice of two or three of them, and shew how little ground there is for the exceptions Mr. Currie makes unto them.

The first two instances I give, to shew that the judicatories were worse after the protestation against the assembly 1733 was entered, are, the act and sentence of the said assembly against the protesting ministers, and the arbitrary execution of the same by their commission. Upon the foresaid act and sentence past by the assembly, Def. p. 159. I say, "I doubt if Mr. Currie shall find a parallel to this extraordinary sentence since our reformation from Popery, whereby four ministers were thrust out from communion with the judicatories, on account of a protestation for their just and necessary exoneration." Upon this says Mr. Currie, Vind. p. 160. "If Mr. Wilson's memory has failed him in this, he may remember what I doubt not he knew before, namely, That in 1651, which was near 100 years after our reformation from Popery, the assembly at Dundee did not only suspend or cast out, but actually deposed, four worthy ministers—for protesting against that assembly, &c." But I doubt not that Mr. Currie knows very well, that the ministers who were deposed in 1651 were not deposed for a protestation for exoneration, as was the case in 1733; but they were deposed for a protestation and declinature, disowning the authority and constitution of the said assembly. I have given instances in the Defence, that Mr. Currie sometimes disguises matters of fact; and this is another instance of this kind: The case above-mentioned, in the year 1651, is quite different from the case 1733. And I still affirm, that Mr. Currie cannot give a parallel to the conduct of the present judicatories since our reformation: There was never such an act of tyranny exercised, whereby four ministers were thrust out from ministerial communion, merely for a protestation for exoneration. The worthy ministers who were deposed in the year 1651 were deposed for declining the authority of a pretended assembly at Dundee, and, in this respect, the case was parallel unto the case of the seceding brethren in the year 1739; but, with
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this difference, that the declinature in the foresaid year was a judicial act and deed, whereas that in the year 1651 was extrajudicial deed. I may also add, that the declinature 1739 was upon a broader foundation and ground than that in the year 1651: However, from the practice of the world, ministers in the year 1651, one of whom died a martyr for our covenanted principles, viz. Mr. James Guthrie, we may see that it is not unprecedented in this church, to decline the authority and disown the constitution of such assemblies, which are not constitute in a right and lawful manner. We may also see a precedent for such ministers continuing in the exercise of the office of the ministry, who are suspended, cast out or deposed by pretended assemblies.

The other instances I give, that the present judicatories are much worse in their conduct and procedure, have taken place since the secession was declared November 1733; particularly Def. p. 160 their continuing to authorise, support or countenance the violent settlement of ministers, either upon the footing of the patronage-act, or the repealed act 1732. I give several examples of this. Tho' Mr. Currie continues to justify his assertions, viz. That some stop has been put to violent intrusions, and that a considerable stop has been put to them for some time bygone, Essay, p. 6, 30. yet he cannot refuse that several of the instances I mention are such, where by violent intrusions were either authorised, countenanced or supported. But as to some others of them he affirms, Vind. p. 161. That there was no violent intrusion in the case, particularly the settlement of the parish of Perth with Mr. David Black. This settlement I reckon among the violent settlements, Def. p. 161. where I assert, "That it was upon the footing of the act 1732, when the majority of the elders were dissenting from the said settlement, and a constitution session reclaiming against the same before all the judicatories of the church." But says Mr. Currie, "It was no violent intrusion, tho' there was the small majority of one elder against it." But in this Mr. Currie is misinformed: For there were fourteen elders against it, and only twelve for it; consequently, there was a majority of two elders: Likewise the session being orderly and regularly met, one of the ministers did always preside in their determinations and resolutions against the said settlement. Another reason Mr. Currie gives to shew that this settlement at Perth was not a violent intrusion, is, That according to his information, "to balance the

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“foreſaid ſmall majority of elders againſt Mr. Black’s call,
 “there was a majority of ſixteen of the magiſtracy and coun-
 “cil for the ſame; and likewise, beſide the heritors not of
 “our communion, there was a majority of heritors not for it;”
 and therefore he does not reckon it a violent intrusion. But
 then, according to Mr. Currie’s information, Mr. Black’s call
 was purely upon the footing of the act 1732; and, if Mr.
 Currie is conſiſtent with himſelf in his former writings, he will
 never make it appear that a ſettlement purely upon the foot-
 ing of the act 1732 is not a violent ſettlement. Mr. Currie adds,
 “There may be a majority of the elders againſt a call, and
 “yet the perſon called have God’s call and his peoples.” But
 this is nothing to the preſent purpoſe; in regard I may upon
 as good ground ſay, That there may be a majority of a town-
 council and heritors for a call, and yet the perſon called want
 God’s call and his peoples; and, if Mr. Currie is conſiſtent
 with himſelf in his former writings, he cannot reſuſe this.
 Mr. Currie ſubjoins, “Conſidering the good character Mr.
 “Wilſon uſed to give of the candidate before that ſettlement
 “came under conſideration, it is thought he might well have
 “ſpared this, which is no inſtance to his purpoſe.” To which
 I reply, That, tho’ I ſhould give the greateſt character unto
 any man, I do not think that this does oblige me to be ſilent
 from teſtifying againſt his ſettlement, if his after-ſettlement
 is not agreeable to the rules of the goſpel: And therefore I
 thought it my duty to mention this, amongſt the other in-
 ſtances which I give of the violent ſettlements that have taken
 place, and which have been authoriſed by the preſent judica-
 tories, ſince the ſeceſſion was declared.

Mr. Currie, it ſeems, thinks he had not ſaid enough, in the
 page of his Vindication above-quoted, concerning the ſettle-
 ment of Perth; therefore, amongſt his Addenda, Vind. p. 341.
 he ſays, “Since writing what is above. I have had informa-
 “tion, which I doubt not may be depended upon, that as there
 “was a great majority of the town-council of Perth, with a
 “majority of heritors, and heritors of our communion; ſo
 “alſo there was a conſiderable majority of the heads of fa-
 “milies for Mr. David Black’s call: The whole preſbytery
 “except one miniſter and an elder, the whole ſynod, and al-
 “moſt the whole general aſſembly, were for it. And ſeeing
 “Mr. Wilſon objects nothing upon this head, nor has made
 “the leaſt inſinuation of the ſettlement’s being made contra-
 “ry to the mind of the congregation; this ſays undoubtedly,
 ly,

"ly, and without dispute, there hath been, if not a majority
 "yet at least an equal number of heads of families also for
 "that settlement." But since Mr. Currie's above information
 is far from being distinct and full, and since it is, as I doubt
 not, upon design sent abroad unto the world; I judge it
 my duty to give a more particular information with respect to
 some steps that were taken towards the settlement mentioned
 1^{mo}, Before the settlement of the parish of Perth came under
 the session's consideration, the magistrates and town-council
 did by a vote declare themselves in open council for Mr. Black
 as their minister. 2^{do}, After the majority of the council had
 declared themselves by a vote as above, such of the members
 of town council as were members of session applied to the session,
 on, that they might join the town-council in a petition to the
 presbytery for the moderation of a call; but, finding that the
 session were not ripe for such a step, the town council resolved
 ed by themselves to apply to the presbytery. 3th, In consequence
 of the above resolution, the town-council did, without the
 concurrence of the session, petition the presbytery for the mo-
 deration of a call. 4th, The session, having by a considerable
 majority found that they were not ripe for a moderation, did
 at the same time petition the presbytery for a delay. 5th, The
 moderation of a call was granted upon the sole application of
 the town-council, when the session at the same time had de-
 clared they were not ripe. 6th, After the presbytery had granted
 the above petition of the town-council, the session appointed
 the elders and deacons to go thro' their several quarters,
 and to enquire at the heads of families or householders, whom
 they inclined should be their minister, whether Mr. David
 Black, or a reverend minister who was also at that time nam-
 ed, leaving it at the same time to the heads of families to pro-
 pose any other they pleased; and the elders and deacons were
 also appointed to bring in to the session an exact list of the
 heads of families who were for one or other of the persons
 named, or who should propose any other person to be their
 minister: And, in the said enquiry, it was appointed, that
 heads of families or householders, without distinction of male
 or female, if there was no male head of the family, should be
 enquired; no exception was made, except of such who were
 under process for scandal, or who did not attend gospel-ordi-
 nances dispensed by the ministers of Perth. 7^{mo}, When the
 several elders and deacons made their report to the session,
 the session found, that the majority of heads of families and
 householders

householders had declared themselves for another than Mr. David Black to be their minister. But, since this sentence of the session was controverted, I shall not here insist upon it; and, since Mr. Currie says that Mr. Wilson objects nothing against his information, upon this head I shall only tell him, that Mr. Wilson read and gave in to the session, a short time before Mr. David Black's settlement, a declaration containing his reasons why he could neither own Mr. David Black as his colleague in the work of the ministry, nor join in session with him. And in his said declaration, when giving his mind upon the head mentioned by Mr. Currie, he expresses himself in the following terms; "I must here observe, that when I consider that the town council did by a vote declare themselves for Mr. David Black before ever the case was brought before the session, as also that they did apply for a moderation before ever the congregation were enquired into, I cannot but judge the concurrence so much spoke of (to wit, with Mr. Black's call) was very much influenced by the foresaid deeds: and therefore, as I am not satisfied that the said Mr. Black is the choice of the majority of the congregation, so it does not appear to me that he is the free choice of all and every one of them who have declared themselves for him." And I can safely add, that if (according to Mr. Currie's principles, as they are laid down in his *Jus Divinum*) the above mentioned enquiry had been confined to male communicants, a great majority had been found against Mr. Black's settlement.

Mr. Currie thinks fit to subjoin another piece of information given him concerning the settlement of Perth: Says he, I am certainly informed, Mr. Black's settlement was made upon the same footing on which Mr. Wilson's own settlement and all other settlements since the revolution have been made in the town of Perth, and without the least regard to the act 1723." But I can assure Mr. Currie that he is certainly misinformed, in regard there was never a settlement in Perth since the revolution, that proceeded upon the sole application of the town council for the moderation of a call; and also, that there has been no settlement in Perth since the revolution, where the session did not apply the presbytery for moderation; and this the session found by a committee of their number, who were appointed to search the session register as far back as the revolution. I can also inform Mr. Currie, that there were several considerable differences betwixt the footing upon which Mr. Black was settled, and Mr. Wil-

son's settlement; such as, *1mo*, In Mr. Wilson's settlement, the session did unanimously apply the presbytery for the moderation of a call; but, in Mr. Black's settlement, the case was otherwise, as has been observed. *2do*, In Mr. Wilson's settlement, the session did unanimously vote for him, and sign his call; but, in Mr. Black's settlement, the majority of the elders were dissenting and reclaiming against the same. *3tio*, In Mr. Wilson's settlement, there was not one in the congregation dissenting or reclaiming; but, in Mr. Black's settlement, the case was otherwise, in the manner I have already observed, *4to*, In Mr. Wilson's settlement, not only was there none in the congregation dissenting or reclaiming, but, as the colleague ministers and elders at that time owned and declared, the whole congregation were unanimously desiring the same; but this was not the case in Mr. Black's settlement, as has likewise been already observed: And therefore Mr. Currie may see that his informations are not always so certain as he apprehends and gives out.

Before I pass this head of the intrusion of ministers, I shall only make a few observes;

1mo, That as the present judicatories continue in the practice of imposing ministers upon dissenting and reclaiming congregations, so their sin in this is highly aggravated; in regard it is done in face of manifold representations and remonstrances to the contrary, both from ministers, elders and people through all corners of the land: Also, by their management in this matter, the flock and heritage of God are scattered and broken, and a door thereby opened for the settlement of a lax and corrupt ministry in the church.

2do, I likewise observe, That the sin of the intrusion of ministers is yet more highly aggravated, when a testimony is lifted up in a way of secession from the judicatories upon the account of their complex course of defection from the Lord, and, amongst other things, upon account of the violence that is done by them to the flock and heritage of God: Therefore, when, notwithstanding of this, they continue in their transgression, it is a plain evidence that they are obstinate in their sin, and that they refuse to be reformed.

3tio, When Mr. Currie gives it as his judgment, Essay, p. 30. "That tho' a person hath been thrust in upon a people in an undue manner, yet their after-acceptance, approbation, and submission to his ministry, makes him a pastor to them, supplying the want of election at first;" Here I observe

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serve, that the after-acceptance and submission of the people to an intruder does not remove the scandal and offence that he has given by his undue entring into the holy ministry; and however some may please themselves by submitting unto the ministry of such, yet they are guilty in so far of turning their back upon a testimony against the violence done to the heritage of God, or against mens entring into the ministry by a wrong door; which, as I observed already in the former Section, Mr. Currie acknowledges to be the case of such as are settled over dissenting and reclaiming congregations. And surely, all that would cleave to the Lord, and who would follow him fully in a day of sinning and backsliding, ought carefully to notice *the signs of the times, and hold fast the word of the Lord's patience*, in any particular instance which the word and providence of the Lord calls them unto: And intrusions having now in a particular manner become the trial of this church, and likewise a more solemn testimony being now lifted up against the same, it is more sinful and dangerous, in any to depart from or let go a testimony against violent settlements:

Another instance which I give in the Defence, to shew that the judicatories are worse since the secession was declared from them, is the conduct both of ministers and judicatories in the affair of the act anent captain Porteous; and I conclude my reasonings upon this head in the following manner, Def. p. 169. "Since by the above-mentioned act of parliament; and the reading thereof, the present judicatories of this national church, as they enjoy the civil or legal establishment; are declared and acknowledged to be subordinate unto the civil powers, and since no testimony has been offered by any of the said judicatories against this grievous incroachment upon the power and authority of the King of Zion over his own spiritual kingdom, it plainly follows, that this usurpation is submitted unto by the judicatories of this national church; and therefore, by their submission unto the same, their constitution is in so far altered and changed, that they cannot be held and esteemed as courts that are immediately subordinate unto the King of Zion, but as courts that have changed their holding, and who have subordinated themselves unto the civil powers: Hence it is evident; that they are vastly worse than when the protestation was entred *anno 1733.*"

Mr. Currie thinks fit to pass over my reasonings, from which the above conclusion is drawn. He tells his reader,

Vind. p. 166. " That he determines nothing anent the lawfulness or unlawfulness of reading the act anent captain Porteous." And no doubt he thinks that in this he acts a wise part ; yet I humbly judge, that, if he had entred into the argument, he ought to have considered what weight and force is in my reasonings, for proving that the present judicatories, by their conduct in this important affair, have changed their holding of the King of Zion, and have subordinate themselves to the civil powers in their ecclesiastical capacity. But, since Mr. Currie has waved the argument, I shall not here further insist upon it ; only I must observe, that Mr. Currie tells his reader, Vind. p. 165. " That seeing the readers of the act " solemnly declare, that had their views of that act been the " same with those of the non-readers, or that the reading was " in the least a wronging of the Headship of Zion's King, they " would rather their heads had been separated from their bodies, than been guilty of reading ; charity obliges us to " believe that they are ingenuous." But the professions and declarations that men may make with respect to their own practice is not the rule by which we are to judge the same, but the law and the testimony. As for instance, will not the grossest Erastians say, If they thought their principles and practice were a wronging of the Headship of the King of Zion, they had rather their heads were separated from their bodies, than maintain such principles, or hold such practices ? And, according to Mr. Currie's reasoning, does not charity oblige us to believe they are ingenious ? Consequently we must never testify against their principles or practice ; Why ? They do not own such consequences as we draw from the same. And if we will believe the Pope of Rome, he will tell you, that he owns Christ to be the sovereign Head of his church ; and if we shall assert that he does not, because he pretends to be Christ's vicar upon earth, he will refuse the consequence, and tell you, that, tho' he is Christ's vicar, he owns that Christ is the only Head of his church. All that I here intend, is to shew, that, when consequences from mens principles or practice are just and native, they ought at least to be testified against, as if they were in express terms adopted by them ; as also to shew, that mens professions or declarations are not to be the rule of our judging or witness-bearing, but the law and testimony, or the principles and facts themselves are to be brought unto the law and testimony, and judged thereby : Therefore, whatever views the readers of the foresaid act may

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alledge they have had of the same, whatever professions or declarations they may make of their regard to the Headship of Christ, yet their practice ought to be condemned ; and the conduct of the judicatories is justly chargeable with the above conclusion which I have made, from the reasons and arguments I have advanced, Def. p. 165. to 169.

As for the other instances I give in the Defence, to shew that the present judicatories, instead of setting about reformation-work since the secession was at first declared, are obstinately going on in a course of defection ; I refer the reader to the Defence, from p. 169. to 174. which, if he pleases, he may compare with Vind. p. 170, 174. as also, with what I have said in the second Section of this chapter, concerning the conduct of the two late pretended assemblies against the seceding ministers. I shall conclude this section with observing. That as the secession from the present judicatories became necessary and warrantable upon their refusing to be reformed and reclaimed, notwithstanding of the means that were used to reclaim them ; so, while they continue to justify themselves in their iniquity, while they shew no evidence of a disposition towards reformation, yea, while they add iniquity to iniquity, in the several instances which I have given, it is just and warrantable to continue in a state of secession from them, and to testify in this manner for our received and covenanted principles, and against the course of defection carried on by the present judicatories, until they return to their duty. And may the Lord himself *see our ways and heal us* ; may he, for this end, pour out his Spirit from on high, that we may all *look upon him whom we have pierced, and mourn*, for the manifold dishonours and indignities that have been done him by judicatories of his house in Scotland ! Until some such frame and disposition of spirit be amongst us, I despair of seeing a desirable unity and harmony restored unto us.

S E C T. V.

Containing the Conclusion of the Argument for Secession from the present Judicatories.

I N the preceeding sections I have evinced, that the present established church, considered in her ecclesiastical capacity, is not a true church of Christ, according as the

terms are taken in our first Confession of Faith; in regard she doth not confess the truths of God, formerly received, acknowledged and sworn to by the church of Scotland, in opposition unto the dangerous errors that have been breached amongst us, and by which the scheme of divine truth, laid down from the word of God in our Confession of Faith, is subverted; as also, in regard she is tyrannical in the administration of government and discipline; and likewise, because such are authorised, countenanced and supported, in the administration of gospel-ordinances, both word, sacraments and discipline, who ought not to be received and acknowledged by the church as her lawful and sent ministers. And from what I have observed in the preceeding section it likewise appears, that this particular visible church, in her ecclesiastical or judicative capacity, is going on in a course of defection, and refuses to stop her course, or to return to the Lord, tho' the proper and ordinary means have been used to reform and reclaim her: And therefore I conclude, that the minor part, tho' few in number, who desire to be found faithful to the Lord, may and ought to depart from ecclesiastic communion with the backsliding part; and that such as are office bearers amongst them may and ought to exercise the keys of government and discipline, in a *distinct capacity* from the majority who are the backsliding part, for the ends and purposes for which they are given unto the church by her glorious and exalted Head.

That, in the case above-mentioned, the minor part, who desire to be found faithful to the Lord, have divine right and warrant to exercise the keys of government and discipline in a distinct capacity from the majority who are the backsliding part, is, what I humbly judge I have proven, Def. Chap. 2. Sect. 5. And I am satisfied the reader should compare what I have there said, with Mr. C — 's Vindication, Chap. 5. Sect. 6. and let him judge for himself, if Mr. Currie has entred into the argument, or taken off the force of my reasonings on this head.

Beside the argument for secession from the present judicatories in the manner as it is stated above, I have also observed, That sinful terms of communion are imposed upon the ministers and members of this church, by the acts of assembly 1733 against the protesting ministers and the ministers of the presbytery of Dunfermline, Def. Chap. 2. Sect. 4. p. 127. But what I mainly intend here is, to notice what I offer for confirming the argument for secession, upon the following proposition which I lay down, Def. p. 62. viz. "If our com-

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"munition or conjunction with any particular church binds us
 "up or restrains us from the discharge of any duty, which
 "our station, office and character, by the command of God,
 "does oblige us unto, whether the restraint that is laid upon
 "us be explicite or more implicite; then, and in this case,
 "secession from such a particular visible church is necessary
 "and warrantable duty." Mr. Currie does not call in ques-
 tion the truth of the above proposition. I give some particu-
 lar instances in the Defence, that the above is the state of
 matters in this national church, as she is represented in her
 present judicatories; and, since Mr. Currie makes exception
 to the instances I give, I shall take notice of some of them.

The first instance I give is, Def. p. 132. and 139. viz.
 "That a judicial testimony for truth is a debt that the office-
 "bearers of the church owe both to the present and succeed-
 "ing generations; and that ministers of the gospel particu-
 "larly, if they would fulfil that ministry which they have re-
 "ceived of the Lord, ought not only doctrinally to declare
 "the truths of Christ, but also judicially assert them, in op-
 "position to the particular errors by which they are subvert-
 "ed in the times and places wherein they live: But the pre-
 "sent judicatories have refused to condemn in particular and
 "express terms several pernicious errors, by which many im-
 "portant truths, held forth from the word of God in our
 "Confession of Faith, are opposed and subverted; how then
 "shall the duty we owe to the Head of the church, or the
 "debt we owe to present and succeeding generations, be dis-
 "charged? If the minor part, who are sensible of their duty,
 "continue in conjunction with the judicatories, they cannot
 "lift up a judicial testimony for truth, they cannot by any
 "judicial act or deed condemn the particular errors which
 "are vented, or testify particularly against former and pre-
 "sent defections; the majority bear the keys of government
 "and discipline, and the minority cannot exercise them while
 "they continue in conjunction with them." Mr. Currie, Vind.
 p. 144. "owns, that ministers ought not only doctrinally to
 "declare the truths, but also judicially to assert them." Yet,
 Vind. p. 135. he replies to my above argument in the follow-
 ing manner; If the brethren thought the lifting up of a ju-
 dicial testimony duty, then, I dare say, their dealing with
 "judicatories for such a testimony would have been sufficient
 "exoneration of themselves, at least with entering a protest that
 "they were free from the guilt of that omission." But if it

is a positive duty unto which the ministers of the church are obliged, then the key of government and discipline should be exercised according to the command of God, in lifting up a judicial testimony for truth; as well as the key of doctrine, in a doctrinal publishing and declaring of the same; especially when the judicatories of a church do refuse to discharge this duty: But if by outward force and violence the minor part are hindred from meeting together to discharge this debt which they owe to present and succeeding generations, and that duty which they owe to the Head of the church, this alters the case.

Mr. Currie further replies to my above argument, "If the brethren thought not their dealing, in this manner he has mentioned, sufficient, they might have done as the protesters in the synod of Perth and Fife, when they published their Testimony in 1658, and that would have exonerated them." That is, the brethren might have contented themselves with an extrajudicial testimony. But, if a judicial testimony is warranted by the word of God, if it is a commanded duty, as I have shown it is, Def. p. 135, 139. particularly from the commands that are given to ministers *to fulfil the ministry that they have received from the Lord, and to feed the flock of God*, which includes a *feeding* by the key of government and discipline, as well as by the key of doctrine; and since, as Mr. Currie owns, a judicial testimony for truth is the duty of ministers: Then an extrajudicial testimony is not sufficient to exonerate them, when the church is in such a situation as I have evinced this national church as represented in her present judicatories is; especially if the minor part, tho' few in number, who desire to give glory to the Head of the church, by a judicial confessing of him and witnessing for him, have access freely and peaceably to meet together. As for the case of the protesters above-mentioned, Mr. Currie's argument must run after this manner: The protesters in the year 1658 thought themselves sufficiently exonerated with an extrajudicial testimony; therefore it is sufficient for the exoneration of ministers in the present state of the church. But, who may not see the weakness of this consequence? It is plain, that the different periods of the church, and the different circumstances into which she is brought, require and bring forth different ways and means of testifying. I shall only add, That if a judicial witness-bearing unto the truth is required and commanded by the word of God, as I have shown it is, both in the

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Defence, and in the printed letter; then my argument stands good, as it is stated above: And therefore I do not think myself obliged to dip into the question about the conduct of the protesting ministers in the former period, or to enquire whether or not the protesting ministers in the synod of Fife and Perth ought to have proceeded further than an extrajudicial testimony.

Mr. Currie further alledges, That testimonies ought to be given in the judicatories without separation; and that, tho' we are to contend earnestly for the faith, Jude 3. this ought to be done in the judicatories; and, Vind. p. 139. according to Manton on Jude, we must contend for every truth of God according to its moment and weight: Yet "undue rigours" are not to be justified, nor the breaking of church-fellowship and communion, and the renting of the body of "Christ." All this is very true; but that which I assert is, That, according to the above command to contend for the faith, each and all are obliged in their several stations and characters, and according to the several ecclesiastic offices which they bear, to contend for the faith: Private Christians ought in their station, and the office-bearers of the church ought to contend according to their station; and this is not a vindicating undue rigours. If the office-bearers of the church do not in their judicative capacity confess the truths of Christ, what do they more than private Christians? It is true, ministers by virtue of their office may doctrinally publish the truths; but, when there is no more, the ecclesiastical body does not confess and acknowledge them. A doctrinal declaration of the truths by ministers *separatim* is but a private deed, when compared with the ecclesiastic body; and, when this is all that is done by ministers, the glory of an ecclesiastical confession of Christ, and of his words, is not given unto him. And the guilt is yet more hainous, not only when Christ is not owned nor confessed by the body ecclesiastic, but when the body ecclesiastic bear down the truths of Christ: And this is done, when they refuse to confess him in his person, truths and members, in opposition to the injuries that may be done him in these; whereby they draw a veil over the declarative glory of the Redeemer; as is the case with the present judicatories, in all the instances I have given, both in the Defence and in the former sections of this Continuation. Mr. Currie still alledges, That we should testify in the judicatories; otherwise it is division, breaking church-fellowship, renting of the body of Christ. But, who are the dividers?

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Who are the breakers of church-fellowship? &c. Whether the majority of an ecclesiastical body, who must still be reckoned the church-representative, and who refuse to lift up testimony for Christ in their judicative capacity; or the minority, who judge it a duty incumbent upon them, as office-bearers, to make a joint judicial confession of Christ, in opposition to the injuries done him in his truths and members. Mr. Currie, Vind. p. 145. says, "He might tell Mr. Wilson, there is a small proportion between the judicial testimony of four or eight persons to a general assembly." But I told him, Def. p. 138. That numbers give not authority or weight to a cause of this nature; it is truth itself on their side, that gives weight to their deed. A judicial testimony, when it is for truth, has as much weight in the hands of four or five met in the name of Christ, as in the hands of four or five hundred. A judicial testimony for truth has its weight from the cause itself; it has sufficient weight from the authority of the Head of the church, obliging his office-bearers to feed his flock, and to teach, not only doctrinally, but judicially, all things whatsoever he hath commanded them; it has sufficient weight from the authority of the Lord Jesus, obliging us to confess him and his words before an adulterous generation. Mr. Currie tells his reader, Vind. p. 145. That I insist upon a judicial testimony *ad nauseam usque*. I take the meaning of his Latin phrase to be, That my insisting upon a judicial testimony is nauseous: And I verily believe that my insisting upon a judicial testimony is nauseous to him, that it is nauseous to his brethren, and nauseous to the present judicatories; the judicial testimony of the associate presbytery is what has awakned their rage and indignation against the seceding ministers. But, however a judicial testimony for truth may be nauseous to them all, I can freely challenge Mr. Currie and all his brethren, if they can refuse it, if it is not a duty laid by the Head of the church upon the office-bearers of his house, in their ecclesiastical or judicative capacity, to confess Christ and his truths, and to testify judicially against whatsoever is prejudicial thereunto: And, if they shall say that the above is not duty, they may as well say that the commands given to ministers, to *feed the church of God*, Acts xx. 28. and to *feed the flock of God*, 1 Pet. v. 7. do not oblige and warrant the office-bearers of the church to exercise the key of government and discipline; and I suppose they will get few of our Presbyterian divines who will join them in this.

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I shall only mention another thing which the office-bearers of the church are obliged by their office unto, and which cannot be performed in the present circumstantiated state of this established church, while such as are aggrieved with the proceedings of the judicatories continue in ecclesiastic conjunction with them, and do not act in a distinct capacity from them, viz. Many congregations in Scotland are groaning under the load and weight of intrusions; they want faithful gospel-ministers: But, how can such ministers as pity their case, take the proper steps towards their help and relief? How shall they license proper persons as probationers for the holy ministry? Or, how shall they ordain and appoint ministers over the oppressed heritage of God, to labour among them in the work of the gospel? There is no doing of this, while they continue in conjunction with the present judicatories. Thus I have laid the argument, Def. p. 133. To which Mr. Currie replies, Vind. p. 136. "Tho' I am sorry ever any congregation had the least ground to complain; yet I cannot see what authority the brethren have to license and ordain ministers thro' all the kingdom of Scotland, being neither apostles nor evangelists, nor chosen for superintendents by this national church. *No man taketh this honour to himself, but he that is called of God*, Heb. v. 4. I humbly think, they have as much right to go thro' England and Ireland, yea, thro' Holland, France and Germany, as thro' the whole kingdom of Scotland." Mr. Currie says, He is sorry for the state of many congregations in Scotland: but, what does he for their help and relief? It is like he may reason and vote in the judicatories against some intrusions, he may speak against them, and profess to lament them; but for all that he does against them, and for all that is done by his brethren who profess to be sorry for intrusions, oppressed congregations must either submit to the ministry of intruded hirelings, or continue as sheep scattered without a shepherd. And I do not see how the office bearers, who profess to be grieved for the above state and circumstances of the flock of Christ, can answer for it to the charge given by the Head of the church, or to the church, while they ly by, and do not endeavour to give effectual help and relief to the destitute flock of Christ. The seceding ministers never pretended to plead the authority of apostles, evangelists or superintendents for what they do; neither have they ground to make use of any such plea to support them in their practice. Mr. Currie may forbear, if he pleases, his sneering manner

manner of expressing himself: As the seceding ministers and ministers of the catholic church, they might, upon a clear and plain call, go and ordain ministers in any of the places here mentioned; and as for England or Ireland, considering the degenerate and broken state of the churches there, the seceding ministers, upon an invitation to any place in England or Ireland, might go and ordain ministers there, not only by virtue of their relation to the church catholic, but also by reason of their nearer conjunction with England and Ireland by virtue of the oath of God, and the covenanted uniformity between the three nations. As for the right that the seceding ministers have to exercise their ministry thro' the whole kingdom of Scotland, I answer, *1mo*, They have a general right as I have said, as they are ministers of the catholic church. *2do*, They have yet a more special right to exercise their ministry thro' Scotland, by virtue of their relation to this particular national church; tho' they have a nearer and more immediate relation to their own congregations, yet they have also a relation to that particular visible church whereof they are members: They are ministers of this particular visible church, and not of the churches in France or Germany. *3tio*, They have the right and authority, which Mr. Currier asks for, from our national Confession of Faith or covenant whereby all the members of this particular visible church are bound by the oath of God, to aid, support and assist one another, in the defence of our reformation-principles, rights, privileges and liberties. If the present judicatories had not broke thro' our covenanted order and unity in the many instances I have given, and particularly in this of the intrusion of ministers, it had been a disorderly and irregular practice in the seceding ministers, to have ordained ministers anywhere but in the bounds of their particular presbyteries, and in conjunction with them: But since the case is otherwise, and since the present judicatories have broke the bonds of our ecclesiastical union and conjunction; and particularly, since they are carrying on a course of defection from our covenanted principles, since by their tyranny in the administration they are scattering the flock and heritage of God, since they do refuse to confess judicially our received principles, both in doctrine, government and discipline, in opposition unto the injuries that are done them: It is the duty of the seceding ministers yea, they are bound and obliged by the oath and covenant of the Lord, which lies upon all the members of this particular visible

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visible church, according to their several stations, I say, they are bound to regard the cries of the Lord's oppressed people thro' the land, and particularly the desires and petitions of such who declare their conjunction with the associate presbytery in the same confession that they make of the truths of God, according to the word of God, and our received subordinate standards of doctrine, worship, government and discipline.

As the associate presbytery have not ordained ministers any where but among such who have applied them for this effect, and who have also professed their conjunction with them, in the same profession that they make of our reformed principles, in opposition unto the manifest injuries that have been done the same in present and in former times; so I do not see how the ministers of the associate presbytery can in a consistency with the duty they owe to the Head of the church, or with that obligation they are under by the oath and covenant of the Lord, binding all the members of this particular visible church, refuse to hear the petitions of such as make the foregoing confession, whether for the settlement of ministers among them, or for the occasional administration of gospel ordinances unto them.

Mr. Currie subjoins, Vind. p. 136. *If the brethren make not greater haste than they have done, 'tis like that oppressed heritage, which they speak so much of, will be long ere it be relieved, when, in the space of six years, they have not ordained except one person for all the corners of Scotland.* It is true, that, at that time when Mr. Currie wrote, the associate presbytery had only ordained one, viz. the late reverend Mr. John Hunter minister of the associate presbytery at Morbatt, who laboured for a short time in the work of the gospel, to the very great comfort and edification of many of the Lord's people thro' the land, and who was soon called home to the joy of his Lord: But if, in the space of time mentioned, the associate presbytery had only ordained one, it is an evidence that they have neither been sudden nor forward in the steps that they have taken; again, if in the said space they have ordained one, it is more than Mr. Currie or any of his brethren have done, or can do, for the relief of the Lord's oppressed heritage, while they continue in conjunction with the present judicatories: And besides, by this time, as I doubt not Mr. Currie knows, some others are ordained by the associate presbytery, for the help and relief of oppressed, scattered and broken congregations, as Stow, Lintoun and
Kilmawers;

Kilmawers; also the associate congregation at Edinburgh lately provided with a minister: And I hope the said congregations are comfortably planted, and that the number of labourers amongst the Lord's scattered people, and in the Lord oppressed vineyard, shall be increased.

As for Mr. Currie's scripture-arguments against the present secession, I refer the reader to what I have said, Def. Chap. 3. Sect. 1. I shall only notice a scripture-argument which Mr. Currie comes often over in his Vindication, and to which he frequently makes his retreat, to prove that our secession from the present judicatories is unwarrantable; it is laid after the following manner, Vind. p. 141. *Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus stayed in judicatories that were an hundred times more corrupt than can be alledged against the judicatories of this church.* He gives several instances to prove, that those with whom Joseph and Nicodemus continued in conjunction were much worse than the present judicatories; such as, The judicatories where Joseph and Nicodemus sat, openly denied the supreme Deity of the Son of God, they openly declared they thirsted to have him murdered, John vii. 32, 45. They enacted laws for excommunicating such as would own Christ, John ix. 22. yea, laws for putting such to death as owned and spake good of Christ, John xii. 10. But the above argument, as it is laid, proves too much; therefore it proves nothing at all: According to the above argument, men may join in ecclesiastical communion with a church which openly denies the supreme Deity of the Son of God, for so did the Jewish Sanhedrim. But Mr. Currie tells us, That an Arian church is a church of the devil, and that no communion is to be kept with such a church as is professedly Arian, Vind. p. 50, 51. Likewise, the Jewish Sanhedrim established the most wicked and sinful terms of communion; for they enacted, That, if any man should confess Christ, *he should be put out of the synagogue*, John ix. 22. But Mr. Currie owns, that the least sinful term of communion is sufficient ground for separation from a church, Essay, p. 36. Yea, if Mr. Currie's argument from the practice of Joseph and Nicodemus is pushed, the argument of the Popish church against the secession of Protestants from them stands good, all the arguments that the Protestants advance to maintain their secession from the church of Rome may be answered from the practice of Joseph and Nicodemus, in their continued conjunction with the Jewish Sanhedrim in the manner the argument is above laid: Yea,

the argument comes with equal force against secession from the most corrupt and degenerate churches that have been or may be upon the face of the earth.

Tho' I judge what I have said in the section of the Defence above-quoted is sufficient to take off the force of Mr. Currie's argument against the present secession, as the same is stated, from the practice of the prophets and saints under the Old Testament, and of Christ and his apostles under the New, who did not separate from the Jewish church, notwithstanding of all the corruptions that were among the members thereof; yet I shall add one observation more, namely, That, under the Old Testament dispensation, Jerusalem was the seat of worship, the temple was the place of their solemn worship; the church's public profession of the God of Israel, and the confession of their faith in the promise, was made in and by the temple, and by their observance of the positive institutions and ordinances of worship that were peculiar to the temple: The ceremonial law given by Moses was essential to the state and constitution of the church under that dispensation, the outward observance thereof was the external ligament and bond of their ecclesiastical union and conjunction: The ceremonial law given by Moses had its different and gradual periods of force and efficacy; according to the ordinary observation of our reformed divines, the ceremonial law was in full force, vigour and efficacy, till the actual manifestation of the Son of God in the flesh; but, during his personal ministry upon this earth, it was languishing; after his resurrection from the dead, and the pouring out of the Spirit at Pentecost, the ceremonial law was dead, but, tho' it was dead, it was not as yet become deadly; therefore we find that Paul circumcised Timothy, *because of the Jews in these quarters*, Acts xvi. 3. But the ceremonial law became deadly after the destruction of the second temple, and the final dispersion of the Jewish nation by the Romans. The ceremonial law, the ligament and bond of union in the church under the Old Testament dispensation, is now quite abolished, Eph. ii. 15. *Having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances.* This external ligament and bond of union and conjunction in the church under the Old Testament being now abolished; under the New Testament dispensation, the external ligament and bond of union unto the whole church catholic visible, is the external profession of the true religion, according to our Confession, Chap. 25. Art. 3.

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And the external ligament and bond of union in any particular visible church, whether presbyterial, provincial or national, is their joint profession and confession of the truths of God, both with respect to the doctrine, worship, government and discipline of the Lord's house, which any particular church has laid down, in such subordinate standards which have been received and adopted by that church, as agreeable unto and founded upon the word of God, the primary rule and standard. Upon the whole, I humbly judge, that a due consideration of the different states of the church under the Old and New Testament is sufficient to remove the difficulties that cast up from the above-mentioned practice of Joseph and Nicodemus; and Mr. Currie or any else may see, that as he manages the argument against the seceding ministers, from the foresaid practice of Joseph and Nicodemus, he cannot reconcile it with his own principles, nor with what he himself acknowledges, as above, to be ground of secession from a church.

Mr. Currie boasts, That the church of Scotland, as she is represented in her present judicatories, is a reformed church; otherwise, says he, *Farewel to all our reformed churches, if it be not the associate presbytery*, Vind. p. 190. I shall leave Mr. Currie to his scoffs at the associate presbytery; they are far from pretending that they are either pure or perfect: But I with Mr. Currie would seriously consider the state of the reformed churches at this day, and whether or not there is just ground to regret, that the reformation-testimony is very much fallen to the ground among them, not only in these things that concern the worship, government and discipline of the Lord's house, but also in matters of doctrine, particularly in what concerns the doctrine of justification and salvation by the free grace of God, thro' the imputed righteousness of our Lord Jesus Christ: This doctrine shined brightly in re-forming times; and as it shined clearly and brightly, so also with great warmth, power and efficacy, when the Lord brought his churches out of Antichristian Babylon. It is observed and acknowledged by all such as have any right discerning of the present state of the churches, that the doctrine of salvation by free grace is very much veiled and darkened in the reformed churches, partly by the growth and spreading of the Arminian heresy, and partly by the falling of the reformation-testimony against the Popish doctrine of justification by good works. With respect to this national church, the reformation-testimony to the doctrine of grace is in a

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great measure fallen to the ground, as may appear from the several instances I have given of the conduct of the present judicatories in matters of doctrine: And if the acts of the several assemblies 1720 and 1722, with respect to some propositions contained in the book called the *Marrow of Modern Divinity*, as also with respect to the representation of twelve ministers upon the act of assembly 1720; if, I say, the acts and deeds of these several assemblies are duly and seriously considered, it may be found, that a deep wound has been given by the present judicatories to the reformation-testimony, as it has been stated against the church of Rome, for the doctrine of justification and eternal salvation by the free grace of God thro' the imputed righteousness of our Lord Jesus. I am not here to enquire into the import, or the design and tendency of the acts above-mentioned, but only to observe, that in the last clause of the act 1722, which is said to be explicatory of the act 1720, the assembly 1722 declare, That it is of a pernicious and dangerous tendency to say, *That holy obedience is not properly a federal or conditional mean, nor has any kind of causality, in order to the obtaining of glory.* When the said doctrine is declared to be of a pernicious and dangerous tendency, then it plainly follows, that the assembly 1722 have declared and affirmed, *That holy obedience is properly a federal or conditional mean, and has some kind of causality, in order to the obtaining of glory;* and this proposition appears to me, to be a giving up a considerable branch of the reformed testimony as it was stated against the causality of good works in order to the obtaining of eternal glory, in opposition unto the church of Rome. I shall only add, That, when the present state of this national church is considered. I humbly judge that Mr. Nisbet, who is sometimes quoted by Mr. Currie, and whom he justly commends as an eminent Christian, and a saint of great experience, Vind. p. 21. had too much ground for an observation that he made in his latter days to some of his friends; when speaking of the degeneracy of this national church in his time, he said, That he apprehended, matters would not be right, till the Lord should bring a church out of the bowels of this church. Tho' I am well assured that it is fact, that the above observation was made; yet I do not bring it, neither will I bring such observations or sentiments of any, whether ministers or private Christians, as an argument to support the cause I plead for: Yet I think it may be obvious to any who duly considers the

state of the reformed churches at this day, and how low the reformation testimony is amongst them, that either the reformed churches must return to the reformation standards, and lift up the reformation testimony against that lamentable degeneracy that has overspread them; or, in order to the carrying on of reformation-work, churches must be brought out of the bowels of the present churches. May the Lord himself graciously pour out his Spirit upon all the reformed churches that they may return unto the Lord their God! and then shall the promise have its accomplishment, Isa. lii. 8. *Thy watchmen shall lift up the voice, with the voice together shall they sing For they shall see eye to eye, when the Lord shall bring again Zion*



C H A P. IV.

*Some remarks upon Mr. Currie's Argument against
Secession from the present Judicatories, as the same
is stated from the two former Periods of this Church*

MR. Currie argues against the present secession from the judicatories, from the conduct of honest ministers in the period before 1638, when, tho' a course of defection was carried on by a corrupt party of the ministry, yet, as he alleges, the honest party of the ministry, during the whole period from 1596 till 1638, did always contend in a way of church communion with the corrupt party; they never made any secession from them, nor did think it duty to separate and erect themselves into separate judicatories: And this, he alledge was the conduct and practice of all the honest ministers, during the foresaid period; and therefore he concludes, that the present secession from the judicatories is unwarrantable and unprecedented. As the argument is laid after this manner Essay, p. 12, 13, 14. I have considered the same in the Defence Chap. 3. Sect. 3. where I observe the following differences betwixt the state of matters in the period mentioned and that of the established church in the present period.

1^{mo}, The course of defection, from the year 1596 and downward, was carried on by threatnings and manifold ac-

of force and violence from the civil powers: But the course of defection is carried on, in the present period, by the judicatories themselves, without any violence or force offered or done them; they walk readily and willingly in their backsliding course and way; our ruin is wholly from ourselves, and not from any external force or violence, either offered unto us, or done us.

2do, The above-mentioned course of defection, during the period before 1638, was carried on by pack'd meetings of some corrupt ministers, with noblemen and gentlemen, who usurp'd the name and authority of a general assembly; and not by the church of Scotland in her ecclesiastical capacity. Mr. Forrester supports me in this observation, when he tells, in his *Rectius Instruendum*, *Consut. 2. Dial. p. 6.* That *the true representatives or lawful assemblies of the church of Scotland never consented to the said course of defection.* But the case is otherwise in the present period. Tho' the associate presbytery have found by their act 1739, and upon the grounds and reasons mentioned in the said act, that the present judicatories are not lawful nor right-constitute courts of Christ; yet it cannot be refused that the present national assemblies consist of members chosen after the usual manner, by presbyteries, burghs and universities; and in this respect the course of defection is carried on by the present judicatories in their ecclesiastical capacity.

3tio, Before the year 1638 there was not an assembly after that witnessing assembly at Aberdeen, *anno 1603*, which was owned by the honest ministers of that period, as a lawful general assembly. From all which it appears, that the course of defection, in the period before 1638, was not carried on by the church of Scotland in her ecclesiastical capacity: But the course of defection at present is carried on by this established church in her ecclesiastical capacity, in regard her national assemblies consist of members chosen after the usual manner, and in regard synods and presbyteries remain in their ordinary subordination to general assemblies; therefore this national church must be considered as one ecclesiastical body, carrying on, in her ecclesiastical capacity, the present course of defection from the Lord, in all the several instances that I have mentioned in the Defence, and in the former chapter of this Continuation.

4to, I shall only add, That, in the period before 1638, there was a material secession from the corrupt party; this

is evident from the paper entitled, *A short Relation of the State of the Kirk of Scotland since the Reformation of Religion unto the present Time*, published anno 1638, which bears, *That the most religious and judicious of the ministry did solemnly protest, in name of the reformed kirk of Scotland, against the ratification of the articles of Perth in parliament; whereunto the most part of the particular congregations have adhered, and never practised these articles.* And to me it is very plain, that when ministers and congregations not only refuse obedience to acts of assemblies, but likewise disown their authority and constitution, as was the case with respect to Perth assembly and other assemblies of that period, that this is a real secession from them, or from the corrupt party who carried on the course of defection. And, if the above observations are considered, I humbly judge they are sufficient to take off the force of Mr. Currie's reasonings against secession from the present judicatories, as he states the argument from the conduct of honest ministers in the period before 1638.

As the argument is laid by Mr. Currie against secession from the judicatories, he affirms, *That all the witnessing ministers before 1638 continued in church communion with the backsliding party, or that they witnessed in a way of church-communion*, Essay, p. 13. Upon this head, I grant to Mr. Currie, that it is true, what the ministers of Perth and Fife say in their testimony, *That the greatest part of the ministry were carried away with the course of conformity, and were couching with Issachar under the burden.* I grant him also the truth of what he reports from Mr. Bailie, Vind. p. 205. *The far most part in the whole isle stumbled upon that block of conformity in more or less.* But tho' the greatest part couched under the burden, and tho' the far most part stumbled in more or less upon that block; yet Mr. Bailie's above words, as also the words of the ministers of Fife and Perth in their testimony, plainly bear, that a great part did neither in more nor in less stumble upon that block of conformity. I doubt not but many ministers, who were honest in the main, couched under the burden; but then a considerable number were kept from conformity either in more or in less: And therefore I refuse what Mr. Currie alleges, viz. *That the witnessing ministers, during that period, witnessed always in a way of church-communion with the corrupt party.* Mr. Currie, to prove his assertion, in his Essay, p. 178. names seven eminent witnessing ministers, who, he says, together with others, continued

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nued to testify in a way of church communion from 1610 to 1637: But I refuse that any of the ministers he mentions, remained in synods after 1610; and I give my reasons for this, Def. p. 215, 216. which Mr. Currie does not answer. He owns, Vind. p. 216. That as to Masters Andrew and James Melvills, two of the ministers he names, his mentioning them was thro' a mere mistake either of the printer or the transcriber; and that what he speaks of them, in the place quoted in his Essay, was but a transient word. As to some others of the ministers whom he names, he tells his reader, He doubts not of their attendance upon judicatories in the period mentioned. But I doubt very much of their attendance upon synods after 1610; and I think I have ground to doubt of this, for the reasons I have given in the above-quoted place of the Defence. Mr. Calderwood is also among the honest ministers, who, according to Mr. Currie, contended in a way of church communion with the corrupt party of the ministry after 1610. But that he did not sit in synods after 1610, I think, is plain from that passage of his printed history, quoted, Def. p. 213. But Mr. Currie thinks fit, Vind. p. 212. to charge my quotation with partiality, because I have not given the full of that conference that passed betwixt him and the bishops. But, what is it that I have omitted? It is, says Mr. Currie, that, when the bishop desired Mr. Calderwood to repair to synods as well as presbyteries, Mr. Calderwood answered, with respect to synods, *He would advise upon repairing to synods.* From this, says Mr. Currie, *Had Calderwood been so clear upon this head at that time, it may be thought he would never have taken the affair to consideration or advisement; so it looks as if he had been in suspense as to his duty upon that point.* But I have much more ground to charge Mr. Currie with partiality in reporting the story; he should have told, that it was at the beginning of the conference, that Mr. Calderwood expressed himself in the above manner: And the true matter of fact is, as the same is reported, printed history, p. 687. That worthy minister, Mr. David Calderwood, was banished the country, and a time was set for his departure: He dealt with the bishops to interpose with the king for a prorogation of the time; the bishops refused to interpose with the king for this effect, unless he would condescend to three things, which they demanded. One of them was, That he should repair to synods. Upon this demand Mr. Calderwood at first answered, *He would advise upon repairing to synods;*

whereby he plainly shewed that he inclined to shift the bishops. But the history adds, *When they urged him to repair to synods*, then, after something spoke by the bishop of Glasgow, the bishop of Caithness said, *Come and say, Hic sum, and then do as you please*. To which Mr. Calderwood answered, *That hic sum is the question*; and then, as I observed in the Defence, he gives some weighty reasons why he could not be present at synods. From all which it appears evident, that Mr. Currie misrepresents the whole story, when he lays it in such a manner, as may make his reader believe that Mr. Calderwood was in a suspence as to his duty upon this point, Mr. Currie, Vind. p. 212. says, *Tho he should yield it, that Calderwood would not go to synods in that period, he is only one instance; and, as the saying is, One swallow makes no summer*. To which I reply, That unless Mr. Currie contradict the true matter of fact, as reported by Mr. Calderwood in his printed history, he must yield it to me, that this eminent minister did, upon weighty grounds and reasons, refuse to sit in synods during that period. If, as Mr. Currie alledges, Mr. Calderwood is but one instance, yet he is an instance of one who understood Presbyterian principles as well as any, then, or since that time: Again, this one instance is sufficient to disprove Mr. Currie's general assertion, That the honest ministers in that period, and Mr. Calderwood amongst the rest, continued to contend in the judicatories, particularly in the synods after the year 1610. As for what Mr. Currie alledges from Calderwood's manuscript history, as I have not access unto it, so I cannot form any judgment upon it; but I make no doubt, that, if I had access unto the said large history, I should find, that the printed history differs in no material circumstance from the manuscript, tho' the manuscript may be more full in many things than the printed history.

Mr. Currie, Vind. p. 223. reckons it a strong presumption, if not a clear proof, of honest ministers attending upon synods as well as presbyteries, *That in all that period, from 1610 to 1638, he has not read of any one person censured or reprov'd by synod or high commission for not attending upon synods, for as strick as was the law ecclesiastic and civil against all such as should not attend upon them*. But, that ministers were censured for not attending upon synods, I can give as good authority for it as Mr. Currie's own testimony, Vind. p. 209. where he tells us from Calderwood's manuscript history, "The
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"purchased, at that woeful assembly holden at Glasgow, was
 "not controuled or called in question even by the whole synods, some few excepted, who were confined before the act
 "of Glasgow, or were since confined, for not subjecting themselves to their authority in the diocesan synods. It is true that ministers were confined after the 1610 for not subjecting themselves to the authority of bishops in the diocesan synods? Then Mr. Currie has soon forgot what he read in Calderwood's manuscript history, when he tells his reader a few pages after, That he has not read of any one person censured or reprov'd by synod or high commission for not attending upon synods. As for Mr. Currie's above alledgance, That not one was censured for not attending upon synods; I doubt not but Mr. Currie has read in Calderwood's history, p. 654. that the high commission put in execution acts of assemblies over-ruled by themselves; and likewise Mr. Currie has read, that the pretended assembly at Glasgow enacted, "That
 "whatsoever minister, without just cause or lawful excuse
 "made, shall absent himself from the visitation or the diocesan assembly, he shall be suspended from his office and benesice; and if he amend not, shall be deprived." And this act made many ministers obnoxious to the high commission court, before whom they were prosecuted for nonconformity. And, since it was not till the year 1618 that the Perth articles became the trial of ministers, it is to me evident and plain, that the processes for nonconformity before the commission court, that did take place before 1618, were chiefly because ministers refused to submit to the authority of bishops in the diocesan synods, or, which is the same thing, because they refused to sit in synods.

As for what concerns the state of presbyteries during this period, I shall refer the reader to what I have observed from the *Apologetical Relation*, Def. p. 218, 219. as also to the account that I give of the state of presbyteries from Mr. Wodrow's history, p. 217. Mr. Currie reckons that Mr. Wodrow has laboured under a mistake in the account that he gives, Vind. p. 229. But Mr. Wodrow supports his relation from some remarks made by Mr. Robert Douglas. Likewise I observed, that the presbyteries during this period continued in an independent state upon any general assembly, till the Lord turned back the captivity of his people in the year 1638. But Mr. Currie entirely omits this, when he pretends, Vind. p. 234. to report my opinion with relation to the conduct of

presbyteries in the same period. And if the state of presbyteries is considered, particularly, as I have reported the same from the *Apologetical Relation*, Def. p. 219. the reader may easily see, that Mr. Currie's argument, from honest ministers continuing to meet in their presbyteries in that period, does not conclude for our continuing in the judicatories in this present period.

There is yet another thing advanced by Mr. Currie, to support his argument, viz. That, during the period before 1638, the witnessing ministers did not then erect themselves into separate judicatories from the then assemblies or synods, Essay, p. 14. Vind. p. 220. Upon this head I grant to Mr. Currie, that they did not so; but then I observe, Def. p. 223. That, *if they had followed this course, they might have expected, according to the violence and tyranny of these times, the same treatment that Mr. Welsh and his brethren met with for holding an assembly at Aberdeen.* I give the reader likewise the judgment of a very considerable minister of this church, viz. Mr. James Melvil, concerning the manner after which he thought the Lord's witnesses in that period should have testified, as the same is expressed in a letter he sent from England to one of his confined brethren in Scotland: It is set down at length, Cald. Hist. p. 614. where he has the following words, "Alas! "if that spirit of action, zeal and courage, that sometimes did "mightily reign in our kirk, were kindled up again, that "might make a few from every presbytery and province to "conveen together in the name of Christ, and censure these "corrupters of the kirk to the uttermost." In the above words this eminent minister does very plainly give his judgment, not only for secession from the corrupt party at that time, but also for meeting together in a distinct judicative capacity from them, in order to exercise the key of discipline for censuring them. Mr. Currie makes some exceptions to this testimony, Vind. p. 214. where he says, "All that is said in that letter will "not prove that it was Mr. Melvil's stated judgment, that "honest men ought to have made a secession at that time." But in the above words Mr. Melvil gives his judgment very plainly, that honest ministers should have met in a distinct judicative capacity from the corrupt party. Mr. Currie adds, "This letter was writ 1609, and before 1610; which last "was the year, according to Mr. Wilson, when honest ministers began to withdraw from synods." But, in whatever year it was writ, it plainly contains Mr. Melvil's judgment for the meeting of honest ministers in a distinct judicative

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cative capacity from such as were carrying on the course of defection, which is the thing I plead for, Mr. Currie further adds, That the above words, " were openly a pathetic wish " to see such Judases censured as had betrayed the church of " Scotland " But the above words of Mr. Melvill's Letter are a plain pathetic wish, that honest ministers might meet in a distinct judicative capacity for the effect mentioned ; which still is the thing I plead for. Mr. Currie subjoins, " Mr. Melvil in that Letter plainly condemns the brethrens conduct ; " for he wished there were a few from every presbytery, " which few would amount to upwards of 130, a few from " every presbytery being at least two from every presbytery : " a few, says he, cannot do it, and a competent number of " many is not to be looked for." But I may also, in a very great consistency with the brethrens conduct, and with what I have been pleading for, both in the Defence and in this continuation, earnestly wish, that there were a few from every presbytery, to meet in a distinct judicative capacity from the present judicatories, who are carrying on a course of defection, in order to make a judicial confession of the truths of Christ, and to testify particularly and expressly against the injuries that have been done our highest Lord, in his Person, truths and members : But alas ! a few cannot censure effectually the ringleaders in the present course of defection, and a competent number of many is not to be looked for, till, as Mr. Melvil expresses himself in the same Letter, " the Lord " arise and make his musters. It is time, O Lord, arise ; it is " time, O Lord, arise ; it is time : For they have made thy " word and law irrit and of no avail ; they have left Jacob in " servitude, and Judah in captivity "

As for that memorable period of this church betwixt 1638 and 1649, it is plain, that Mr. Currie in his Essay loads the assembly 1638, and several of the assemblies of that period, with very unwarrantable and odious proceedings: He complains, Vind p. 23, 24, 25. that I do not notice what he declares, in the preface to his Essay, to be his main end and design in giving instances of the faults, failings and bad acts of assemblies during the period mentioned ; such as, he gives the said instances, that we may confess, grieve for and avoid them ; as also, to shew that, if such or such things were not ground of secession or separation in the former period of this church, they cannot be such now. So Mr. Currie thinks fit to express himself, pref. Essay, p. 5. I do not intend to take
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up the reader's time in searching into the misrepresentations that he makes, and the reflections that he is pleased to cast upon acts of assembly in the former period of this church : I shall only offer the few following observations, which I think sufficient to take off the force of his argument, as it is laid against the present secession, from his alledged instances of faults, failings and bad acts, in the period of our church betwixt 1638 and 1650.

1^{mo}, I grant, that the church militant in her purest times is never perfect, in her best times there may be something still defective or wanting as to the beauty and order of the house of God, and there may be something culpable in the administration ; this is what the associate presbytery acknowledge with respect to the period mentioned, Act and Testimony, p. 18. But yet,

2^{do}, This church endeavoured, and mercifully attained, a considerable pitch of reformation during the foresaid period ; all her several contendings and wrestlings, all her solemn vows and engagements, her declarations and testimonies, pointed towards reformation.

3^{tio}, It is quite otherwise in the present period : This national church, as represented in her present judicatories, is so far from holding fast what we have attained in reformation, or contending towards the same, that she is letting slip these things that we have attained, and the judicatories are justifying themselves in their several defections and backslidings ; and therefore I reckon that the former period of this church was a reforming period, and that the present is a period of defection and backsliding. Hence,

4^{to}, I observe the following difference betwixt the present and the former periods of this church, *viz.* In the period from 1638 to 1650, the general and habitual course and tendency of the proceedings of the judicatories of this church was towards reformation ; whereas the general tendency of the judicatories in the present period is towards backsliding and deformation : And therefore, when the present and former periods are compared, I humbly judge, that the associate presbytery, in emitting their judicial act and testimony, did take what was the most proper step in a testimony of this kind, *viz.* In mentioning the defections and backslidings of this church, they begin where the progress in reformation-work began to stop, and when this church began to make a retrograde motion ; they began at that time, when the sluice was opened to the violent current of backsliding, which has run with

with an impetuous torrent to this very day, viz. in the year 1650, when the public resolutions were entred into, whereby the enemies to our covenanted work of reformation were brought into places of power and public trust. And tho' at the glorious revolution 1688 great and wonderful things were done by the hand of providence, yet we soon forgot the Lord's mighty works; instead of endeavouring to recover the steps of reformation once attained unto, and instead of advancing and making progress in reformation work, we are at this day sunk in degeneracy and defection from the Lord. There is one thing advanced by Mr. Currie, which seems to be laid against what I have now advanced, Vind. p. 24. where he says, "What reformation was in the period betwixt 1638 and 1650, was mainly done by the assembly 1638." By which words Mr. Currie seems plainly to tell his reader, that no main piece of reformation was done in all that period, except what was done by the assembly 1638. Tho' that assembly were instrumental in the Lord's hand in doing great things, yet I humbly judge there were main pieces of reformation begun and carried on after the said assembly: As for instance, Tho' our doctrine was sound, as it is held forth in our first Confession of Faith, which was received and professed from the beginning of our reformation; yet, I think, it was a considerable piece of reformation, when our doctrine was more fully and more clearly held forth, in opposition not only unto the errors of the church of Rome, but also unto the Arminian and other errors which had sprung up in the church after the reformation had begun; and this is done in our Confession of Faith compiled at Westminster, and received by the church of Scotland *anno* 1647. Likewise, these excellent summaries of our reformed doctrine, by way of question and answer in our Larger and Shorter Catechisms, excel any thing of this kind that was done either at or before 1638. Again, our Presbyterian church-government is indeed held forth in our second Book of Discipline; but yet the form of church-government laid down by the assembly at Westminster, and received by the church of Scotland *anno* 1645, excels the second Book of Discipline, especially in two particulars: *First*, The scripture-proofs for the several propositions in our form of church-government are distinctly laid down, which is not done in our Book of Discipline. And, *2dly*, The scripture-warrant for the meetings of the ruling officers of each particular congregation, for the government and discipline thereof,

is also distinctly expressed in our form of church-government but this is not done in our Book of Discipline. Likewise tho' the ordinances of worship were pure from the first beginning of our reformation; yet we had no such directory for worship as that which was agreed upon by the assembly at Westminster, and received by the reforming church of Scotland in the year 1645. Also, I cannot but reckon the covenanted uniformity among the three nations a further and main step of reformation. It was a step of reformation further than what was attained unto at the 1638, or before that time. And therefore, as I cannot agree with Mr. Currie in his above-mentioned assertion, viz. That what reformation was in this period of the church was mainly done by the assembly at Glasgow; so likewise, for the above reasons, I reckon the period mentioned was a reforming period, and that several considerable advances were made in the said period towards reformation.

I intend not to pursue Mr. Currie in the reflections he casts upon some particular acts of assemblies in this period of our church, neither do I think it necessary; I hope all true Presbyterians will own the period betwixt 1638 and 1650 to be a reforming period, yea, a period wherein this church in her ecclesiastical capacity made considerable progress in reformation, tho' at the same time she met with considerable opposition in carrying on reformation-work: And therefore one of the ends mentioned, as above, by Mr. Currie, why he tells the faults or failings of that period of the church, viz. "If such or such things were not ground of secession or separation then, they cannot be such now;" This, I say, is to no purpose in the present argument; in regard, whatever faults, failings or defects she had in the foresaid period, she must be considered as a reforming church at that time: But, in the present period, she cannot, even according to Mr. Currie's own acknowledgement, be called a reforming church; for he tells his reader that she is on the decline, Essay, p. 59. Mr. Currie likewise tells his reader, Essay, Pref. p. 4. that he owns "the Lord honoured his faithful servants in that period to do much for his glory, for which, he says, he desires to give praise." But Mr. Currie should have owned also, that the Lord honoured them, to make considerable advances in reformation, as in the several particular instances I have given: But when Mr. Currie alledges bad acts and acts of tyranny against the assemblies of that period, and that no main piece of reformation was done after the assembly 1638,

it cannot but give ground to suspect, that he does not esteem the period betwixt 1638 and 1650 as a reforming period of this church. But I shall leave Mr. Currie to the treatment he gives this period : If he thinks he has done service thereby unto our reformation-rights, when he mentions faults, failings, and bad acts, and acts of tyranny, and slips over in deep silence all the above instances I have given of the progress that they made in reformation ; let him, as he speaks in another case (Vind. p. 256. viz. upon some answers I make to his objections against our national covenant) “ enjoy his opinion : I shall not spend the reader’s time in answering what he says upon that subject, which in my humble opinion can never satisfy.” I shall only add, That I know some of his brethren, who continue in conjunction with the judicatories, who are no less judicious than himself, are of opinion, that he might have spoke with more modesty of the assembly 1638, and of some acts of other assemblies.

As for the historical account that I give of that great and remarkable appearance of God for this church and land in the year 1638, Def. p. 228. to p. 258. Mr. Currie, Vind. p. 240. tells his reader, He has no controversy with me about it ; only he notices two things, and I shall only notice one of these two things, because I think it needful to clear a fact with respect to our national covenant. He observes, that I assert, Def. p. 238. “ It is a mistake that many are under, when they affirm, that the several acts of parliament mentioned are a part of the oath of the covenant.” Upon this says Mr. Currie, “ I wish he had given us some authority for this ; for, of all that I have read upon the subject, I have never seen any making the least innuendo to that purpose.” To which I reply, That, of all I have read upon the subject, I have never seen any making the least innuendo, that the acts of parliament mentioned in the covenant are a part of the oath of the covenant. I told, Def. p. 238. That, as the king’s coronation-oath was insert among the rest, it would be ridiculous to say, the subjects swore the coronation oath. I think this was one sufficient ground for asserting, that the acts of parliament mentioned after the national confession, were no part of the oath of the covenant. Mr. Currie adds, “ It had not been improper for Mr. Wilson to have shown to what part of the covenant people are sworn, and what not ; or told,

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" in what place that part of the covenant, in which the
 " are concerned, begins, and doth end." To which I answer
 The whole land are bound, not to a part of the national co-
 venant only, but to the whole of it ; and, if Mr. Currie
 wants to know what it is that is called the national co-
 venant, I answer, It is the same which is called the Confession
 of Faith, and which was subscribed at first by the king and
 his household in the year 1580, and thereafter by the persons
 of all ranks in the year 1581, by an ordinance of council
 and acts of the general assembly. Then in the year 1638
 when the general meetings at Edinburgh, or tables, as they
 were then called, resolved to renew the national covenant
 they subjoined to our national Confession several acts of par-
 liament in favours of the reformed religion ; these acts of
 parliament were insert at that time by the said meetings,
 justify their proceedings before the world, and to shew that
 they were not acting contrary to the laudable laws of the
 land, but that they had law on their side when opposing the
 liturgy and book of canons, and for their other proceedings
 in maintenance and defence of our reformed doctrine, govern-
 ment, discipline and worship, sworn to in our national Co-
 fession of Faith.

After the general meetings had insert the acts of parli-
 ment mentioned, follows the bond compiled by the said meet-
 ings, and sworn in the 1638 ; by which bond, the national
 covenant is particularly accommodate and applied to the
 circumstances at that present time. I never doubted, that Mr.
 Currie at least would have known the difference betwixt our
 national confession or covenant, and the bond subjoined to
 it ; but if he knows not where it begins, nor where it ends,
 he may easily know, that, after a short preface, it begins
 with these words, *We noblemen, barons, gentlemen, burgesse,
 ministers, and commons under-subscribing, &c.* and it ends with
 the following words *In witness whereof, we have subscribed
 with our hands all the premisses.* After this is subjoined the
 determination of the assembly at Glasgow in the particulars
 referred to them ; and, by act of the said assembly, the co-
 venant is afterwards signed, according to the determination
 of this assembly in the said particulars. And I reckon that
 the whole land is concerned in the above-mentioned bond
 and in the determination of the foresaid assembly.

C H A P. V.

Containing some Instances of the Injustice done by Mr. Currie to the Judicial Act and Testimony of the Associate Presbytery.

MR. Currie both in his Essay and Vindication frequently accuses the associate presbytery of asserting, in their judicial act and testimony, things that are neither truth nor matter of fact. I hope, I cannot be justly charged with entering into Mr. Currie's conscience, when I affirm, that the tendency of all his false charges and accusations against the Act and Testimony is, to represent the associate presbytery as false witnesses; as also, to fright people from a conjunction with them, in the confession that they make of the truths of our Lord Jesus Christ, in opposition to the injury that has been done them both in former and present times. But, before I enter upon particulars, I shall premise a few things, for clearing a little the import, end and design of a testimony of this kind, now emitted by the associate presbytery.

1^{mo}, The church of Scotland, in her reforming times, was a witnessing and confessing church; the whole body ecclesiastic, both office-bearers and people, did make a joint confession of the truths, both with respect to the doctrine, worship, government and discipline of the Lord's house, against Popery, Prelacy, Erastianism and Sectarianism, and whatever was contrary to sound doctrine and the power of godliness.

2^{do}, The confession that the church of Scotland made of the truths of God, was held forth from the word of God, at first in her large Confession of Faith received *anno* 1560, and in her short Confession of Faith, commonly called the national covenant. Afterwards the confession that this church and land made of the truths of God, was held forth in our Confession of Faith compiled at Westminster, and in the form of church-government, the Directory for worship and ordination of ministers, all received by the general assemblies of this church, in the manner expressed in their several acts adopting the same: And the confession of this church, with respect to the doctrine, worship, government and discipline, as the same are held forth in the above-mentioned composures, was particularly

larly made, by the solemn league and covenant of the three nations, which was sworn by all ranks of persons in Scotland not only *anno* 1643, but also *anno* 1649, after the Confession of Faith, form of church-government, and directory for public worship, had been received by this church.

3^{to}, The above profession and confession of the truths of God was, in reforming times, the outward bond of union and communion in this visible church, both unto church-members among themselves, and unto the office-bearers of the church in their several ecclesiastical capacities.

4^{to}, In the Act and Testimony of the associate presbytery our received standards of doctrine, worship, government and discipline are particularly applied and laid against the errors that have sprung up in this church, and against such corruptions and defections as have taken place therein, by which our subordinate standards have been either obscured or perverted as to their genuine sense and meaning, and by which also palpable deviations have been made from them. Hence, in the assertory part of the Act and Testimony, the truths asserted are viewed as agreeable to the word of God the supreme standard, and also as agreeable to our subordinate standards. Again, in the condemnatory part of the Act and Testimony the errors, corruptions or defections condemned, are viewed as contrary to the word of God, and our subordinate standards received and adopted by this church in her reforming times. Therefore the Act and Testimony of the associate presbytery is not a new standard of church-communion, far less is it to be equalled with our received standards; but it is an application and declaration of their genuine sense and meaning, in opposition to the errors, defections and corruptions that have prevailed both in former and present times.

5^{to}, The presbytery require of all such as accede to them or who come under their presbyterial inspection, that they signify their approbation of their judicial act and testimony; and the plain obvious meaning of this is, that they signify or declare their conjunction with the presbytery in the same confession that they make of the truths of God, held forth from the word of God in our received standards of doctrine, worship, discipline and government: And, in this respect, the presbytery, and such as make accession to them, do state themselves a confessing body; and the confession that they make is of the truths of God, in opposition unto deviations from the same; they make no other confession

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but what has been made by this church, in her reforming and covenanting times; they make no other confession but what this whole church and land are obliged by the word and oath of God to make, and which this national church, as she goes under the name of the established church, doth refuse to make. The confession then that is made by the associate presbytery, and such as are in conjunction with them, upon the footing of the judicial act and testimony, is a confession of the truths of our Lord Jesus, against several deviations and defections from the same, either in principle or practice, which the majority of this visible church stand chargeable with.

I proceed now to the charges and accusations that Mr. Currie brings against the judicial act and testimony. The first I mention is, his alledging, The Act and Testimony contains principles contrary to the word of God and our solemn covenant engagements. This charge and accusation is laid by way of observe upon my following expressions, Def. p. 138. "Tho' the author of the Essay discovers his critical talent with abundance of ill-humour against the seceding brethren. "and tho' he has stretcht himself, as we shall afterwards "see, in order to defame and discredit their Act and Testimony; yet he has not, neither can he charge them with "any principle adopted therein, but what has been received "and confessed by this church in her reforming times." Upon this, says Mr. Currie, Vind. p. 142. "But they are "not so innocent here as he alledges; for they have espoused "principles which are contrary to the word of God, to our "solemn covenant-engagements, and to our laudable acts and "constitutions, as has been shown already, and may be further shown in this Vindication." Unto which I reply, That Mr. Currie has nowhere in his Vindication pretended to show, that any one principle, or that any one proposition in our Act and Testimony, is contrary to the word of God, our solemn covenants, or laudable acts and constitutions. I promised in the entry of this continuation, that I would not use his scurrilous dialect of untruths, falsehoods, slanders, and walking in slanders; but in regard the above charge is not laid against myself in particular, but against the whole presbytery, and against all such as have joined them in the confession they make of our reformed principles, I may therefore be excused, if in this particular instance I do not use that lenity and softness of expression that I have hitherto used in this continuation: And therefore I affirm. That the above charge and

accusation laid against the presbytery's Act and Testimony, as containing principles contrary to the word of God, &c. is a bold calumny; and I may justly crave that the world may hold him as a false accuser and a bold calumniator, unless he condescend upon the particular expressions or propositions in the presbytery's Act and Testimony, which contains principles contrary to the word of God, our solemn covenant engagements, &c. And I hope Mr. Currie may make this particular condescension, without burdening the world with a volume of twenty four sheets of paper; and in this case I shall be willing to attend him, if the Lord give time and health. And I hope the reader cannot refuse that the demand I make is both just and reasonable. In the mean time I must observe, that the pretended assembly 1739 have cleared the seceding ministers of this calumnious charge, when in their act against them they declare, That, if the seceding ministers would shew a disposition to return to the judicatories, this assembly was ready to receive them with open arms.

The second accusation that Mr. Currie brings against the Act and Testimony is, That it contains several things that are neither truth nor matter of fact. He pretends to give several instances to this purpose thro' his Essay, and in his Vindication.

With respect to the above charge I observe, That, in all the particular instances that Mr. Currie alledges, he does not affirm that there is any proposition or any expressions in the Testimony, which contain principles that are contrary to the word of God or our received standards; and I humbly judge this was the thing he should have mainly done, and, until he do this, all his exceptions against the Act and Testimony are of less moment and importance. As I have already observed, he discovers, in the exceptions that he makes, his critical talent with abundance of ill-humour against the seceding brethren, and he stretches himself in order to defame and discredit their Act and Testimony: And since Mr. Currie does not pretend to shew that any principles are espoused in the Testimony which are contrary to the word of God and our received standards, the unprejudiced reader cannot but reckon his critical exceptions against the Act and Testimony do not affect that confession that is made of the truths of God by the associated presbytery and such as declare their conjunction with them, but that they are only a wrangling about some circumstances, and therefore I do not judge it worth my while to go thro' all his particular instances, till he make the condescension

that I have demanded and craved. I shall then only touch at some of the particulars alledged, Vind. p. 330. to satisfy the reader, that his charge of untruth, laid against the presbytery's testimony, is both unjust, and also an idle wrangling about circumstances, that do not affect the confession that the presbytery make in their Act and Testimony: And, in the particular instances which I give, I shall observe the same order in which Mr. Currie has laid them, in the 8th chapter of his Vindication. Only the reader may notice, that the first three exceptions which Mr. Currie makes unto the Testimony are not contained in the Act and Testimony, but in the introduction to it, which, as I have already observed, is no judicial act and deed, and consequently no part of what is properly called the Act and Testimony: But since the introduction contains nothing but what is truth and matter of fact, and since it is the deed of all the brethren, tho' an extrajudicial deed, I shall consider Mr. Currie's instances in the manner, as well as in the order, in which he has laid them.

The first exception Mr. Currie makes unto the Act and Testimony is as follows, viz. He alledges, It is not truth, when the brethren say, "Upon the intimation of the communion's sentence, the ministers therein designed, gave in a protestation, bearing a secession from the judicatories of this church," Introduction, p. 3. But, why is not this truth? Because, says Mr. Currie, "Their secession at that time was only from the prevailing party in this established church, without the least word of making any secession from a judicatory." To which I answer, That I reckon these terms, the prevailing party, and the majority of a judicatory, terms of the same import and signification; and therefore, when a secession is made from the prevailing party or majority of a judicatory, it is a secession from the judicatory itself; seeing the majority of the church-representative is still the church representative.

2dly, Mr. Currie alledges, It is not a true representation, when it is told, introduction, p. 3. "When the brethren considered, that four ministers, being thrust out all at once from ministerial communion with the present judicatories, were a competent number for associating together for the exercise of government and discipline, &c." Mr. Currie, that he may shew that the above is not a true representation, adds, "Had the Testimony said three, instead of four, it had been a juster account; for, 'tis known, they were only three in

“ number when they did first constitute themselves into a presbytry. Mr. Wilson hath owned to sundry, that he wanted clearness to join the associate presbytery at their first constitution.” Unto all which I reply, I hope Mr. Currie will allow me to know better what past among the brethren at their first constitution into a presbytery, than he can know, from any reports made unto him, or from any hearsay stories which he is very forward to publish; and therefore I do not think it amiss to give the reader the following brief history of the seceding ministers constitution at first into a presbytery.

The commission of the general assembly, that met November 1733, passed a sentence against the protesting ministers, whereby they cast them out from communion with the present established church. When this sentence was intimate unto them, they gave in a protestation, whereby they declared a secession from the judicatories, in the manner that the same is expressed in their said protestation before the commission at the foresaid time: And when this was done, immediately after they had gone out from the commission, they agreed among themselves to meet the 5th of December following for humiliation and prayer, in order to ask leading and direction from the Lord, with respect to the step that they should next take, after they had now declared a secession from the judicatories.

The seceding ministers met, according to their above resolution, at the bridge of Garney at the time agreed upon; and the 5th day of December was spent in prayer, humiliation and conference together, concerning the present providences of God towards them. They agreed to meet again the following day for prayer and conference, when the following question was proposed; Whether or not it was their duty in their present situation, when the present judicatories had cast them out from communion with them, and when they had, upon just and necessary grounds, declared a secession from them, to constitute themselves into a presbytery? There was much and serious reasoning upon both sides of the question; they endeavoured, in their reasoning, to compare the word of God and his providences towards them together: And after prayer, and reasoning upon the same, the question was put, *Constitute presently into a presbytery, or not?* And the four brethren did all with one voice give it as their judgment, that they should constitute presently into a presbytery: And the reverend Mr. Ebenezer Erskine was, by their unanimous consent, desired to be their mouth to the Lord in this

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solemn action ; and he was enabled with much enlargement of soul to consecrate and dedicate them to the Lord, and to the service of his church, particularly of his broken and oppressed heritage, in the present situation into which by the holy and wise providence of God they were brought ; and, after prayer, he was chosen moderator of their presbytery. I shall only make two observes upon what passed at this time : The one is, That the presbyterial association was not a rash and inconsiderate deed at first ; near two days were spent in prayer and serious reasoning upon this head, wherein, as I have observed already, the seceding ministers endeavoured to compare the word and providences of God together. Again, in their meetings on the foresaid days, particularly in their presbyterial constitution, I hope they felt and experienced something of the Lord's gracious countenance and special presence. Two reverend brethren, Masters Ralph Erskine and Thomas Mair, were witnesses to all that passed the two days mentioned ; they were not then in conjunction with the four ministers in secession from the judicatories, but the Lord afterwards cleared their way to join them.

After the seceding ministers had constitute presbyterially, they unanimously agreed that they would not be sudden in proceeding to any acts of jurisdiction, but resolved, before any such procedure, to wait if the judicatories of the church would return to our reformation standards ; and therefore they held their presbyterial meetings, for some time after their first erection and constitution, mainly for asking counsel of the Lord, and for mutual advice, and for strengthening one another's hands in the work of the Lord ; as is reported, introduction to the Testimony, p. 5.

After the meeting of assembly 1735, when the brethren observed the conduct of the said assembly, and that no steps were taken towards reformation, three of the seceding ministers were then clear to proceed immediately to the exercise of the keys of government and discipline ; but at that time Mr. Wilson was not clear for taking this step, but was of opinion, that they should only hold their meetings as they had done the former year, namely, for mutual advice in their present situation, and for strengthening one another's hands in the work of the Lord : And indeed this was the only material difference that was amongst that little body, after their secession from the judicatories. But, by the good hand of the Lord upon them, they were kept unite among themselves :

the other three brethren, who were clear for the above procedure, did not proceed to any step of jurisdiction; and nothing of this nature was done till after the assembly 1736, when all the four brethren were convinced, that not only it was duty, but also that it was high time, for them to proceed to the exercise of the keys of government and discipline. The reasons of their procedure after the assembly 1736 are hinted at in the foralsaid introduction, p. 7.

I am in no concert with my brethren in the above historical account which I give, neither do any of them know what I write at the time, and 'tis probable will not know till it comes abroad from the press; but I judg'd it my duty to give the above plain and impartial account, not only to rectify Mr. Currie's above mistakes, founded upon hearsays or stories reported to him, but also for the information of others; in regard that, whatever the effect of our present presbyterial association may be, or whatever may be the after-conduct and behaviour of any of the brethren associate together; it may however appear, that our presbyterial constitution was entered into in a deliberate manner, and with the concurrence of all concerned.

3dly, Mr. Currie alledges, "'Tis not truth, when the brethren say, Independents lodge the keys of government and discipline in the whole community of the faithful; as in the introduction, p. 4. Act and Testimony, p. 100." The reason Mr. Currie gives, why he thinks this is not truth, is, Because the words of the Testimony bear, that this was the opinion of them all, or the generality of the Independents; and he says, 'Tis not fact, that this is the received principle of the generality of Independents. To which I briefly answer; That the brethren express themselves in the same manner that the London ministers do, in their preface to that excellent book, *Jus Div. Reg. Eccles.* where shewing the difference between the Presbyterian and Independent way, and the excellency of the former above the latter, they say, "The Independents hold, that the subject of church government is the *cetus fidelium*, or community of the faithful." And I do not think that I speak by way of disparagement to Mr. Currie, when I affirm, that the London ministers knew as well how to express the principles of the Independents as Mr. Currie does, after all the books he has read or turned over. I must add further, That when Mr. Currie alledges that the brethrens words bear, that the above was the opinion of all the Independents

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dents or the generality of them, he does not quote the brethren's words fairly, for they bear no such thing. Their words, Introduction, p. 4. are, " They also judged it necessary for them to enter into a presbyterial association, not only for maintaining that order among themselves which is required by the word of God;—but also to distinguish themselves from these of the Sectarian and Independent way, who lodge the keys of government and discipline in the whole community of the faithful." Now, when the brethren say, *To distinguish themselves from these of the Sectarian and Independent way*; I humbly judge no reasonable man will say that the brethren's words do bear, that all or the generality of the Independents maintain the principle above-mentioned.

4thly, 'Tis not fact, says Mr. Currie, " When in their Act and Testimony, p. 18. they say, *The church of Scotland in 1638 began where former reformation had stopt.*" And why is not this fact? Because, says Mr. Currie, " This is an insinuation, as if formerly she had not been reformed from Prelacy." But, if Mr. Currie had not curtailed the words of the Act and Testimony, his reader would have easily seen that the words import no such thing as Mr. Currie alledges. The words of the Act and Testimony are, " When, by a surprising and wonderful appearance of divine providence, this church was delivered from the brink of ruin in the year 1638, the judicatories of the church pulled down and carried off the rubbish of defection; they began where former reformation had stopt, and went forward in building and beautifying the house of God." What was that rubbish of defection that was pulled down and carried off? Was it not Prelacy and the five articles of Perth? Was not the reformation stopt by the introduction of Prelacy? Did not the assembly 1638 begin where former reformation had stopt, when they condemned Prelacy, and declared that it was abjured by our national covenant? Did not the judicatories of this church go forward in building and beautifying the house of the Lord, in the several particular instances mentioned in the close of the preceeding chapter? But Mr. Currie must turn over every stone, to force a lie upon the judicial act and testimony.

5thly, Mr. Currie says, It is not truth which is asserted, Act and Testimony, p. 34. viz. " That the principal articles of Mr. Renwick's indictment, and for which he suffered, were his affirming, That the Duke of York, then king

"James VII. was not rightful and lawful king of these realms;
 "and that because he was a Papist, had never sworn the coronation-oath, and was overthrowing the fundamental laws
 "of the kingdom; also his affirming and defending the lawfulness of defensive arms, both for our civil and religious
 "liberties." Upon this Wodrow's history is quoted, Vol. 2, p. 632, 633. I have narrated the words of the act and testimony full; Mr. Currie curtails them, whereby his reader cannot so well understand them. But, what untruth is in the above words? Says Mr. Currie, "In Mr. Renwick's indictment there are no such words as these recorded by Mr. Wodrow; I mean, as the above words printed in Italic." To which I reply, Tho' I have followed Mr. Currie in printing the above words in Italic, yet they are not all printed in Italic in the presbytery's act and testimony, neither are they laid in such a way and manner as if they were the express words of the indictment: Any who considers the above words, will easily see, that the presbytery intends them only as an illustration of the first article mentioned, for which that worthy minister was indicted. And here I might justly return to Mr. Currie one of his own proverbial sayings, *He wants but a hair to make a teather.*

6thly, Mr. Currie asserts, *That it is not truth nor matter of fact, for any to assert, It is one of the principles espoused by this church, That, because one is a Papist, he cannot be rightful and lawful king of these realms; as is alledged, Act and Test. p. 34.* But Mr. Currie has not told the words of the Testimony in which the above-alledged untruth is expressed, and therefore I must report them; they immediately follow the words above-narrated concerning Mr. Renwick's indictment, and they are, *These principles were espoused by this church ever since our reformation from Popery, and were justified by all the three nations at the revolution.* And, what are the principles which the presbytery affirm have been espoused by this church ever since our reformation? They are the principles mentioned in the preceeding head, viz. Mr. Renwick's affirming the lawfulness of defensive arms in the manner expressed above; as also his affirming, That the Duke of York was not lawful or rightful king of these realms, because he was a Papist, and because he had never sworn the coronation oath, and was overthrowing the fundamental laws of the kingdom. And, if Mr. Currie calls in question the truth of what is asserted, he is the first of the Presbyterian denomination,

denomination, so far as I know, that has alledged the above principles were not espoused by the church of Scotland ever since our reformation. But Mr. Currie, that he may fix an untruth upon the Testimony, adds, "If a Papist hath been set upon the throne by the people, they having sworn allegiance to him, he ruling according to law, and defending the subjects in their rights and privileges sacred and civil, he may be a lawful and rightful king; according to the doctrine taught in our Confession, Chap. 23. Art. 4." Tho' I humbly judge, the words of the presbytery's act do not determine in the question as stated above by Mr. Currie, yet he appears to me to pervert the words of our Confession; the words of the Confession are, *Infidelity, or difference in religion, doth not make void the magistrate's just and legal authority.* But according to our principles received immediately after the reformation, when queen Mary abdicate the crown, as also according to the principles which were espoused by the three nations at the revolution, One that is a professed Papist can never have a just and legal authority; and consequently it is nowise contrary to our Confession of Faith to assert, That a professed Papist cannot be lawful nor rightful king of these realms, even tho' all Mr. Currie's *if's* should be taken in; and I know not but some of our moderate Jacobites would desire the Popish pretender only upon such conditions as are above mentioned by Mr. Currie. I have not the least suspicion that Mr. Currie is of Jacobite principles; but I pray and hope, that the Lord shall preserve these lands from having a Papist upon the throne, even tho' he should swear the coronation-oath. I do not think any, that know the principles of Papists, can reckon their liberties sacred or civil to be safe under the government of a Papist: And therefore, if Mr. Currie had pleased, he might have spared his above *if's* and conditions anent a Papist's being set upon the throne; I know not what good purpose or end he intends to promote by them.

7thly, According to Mr. Currie, 'tis neither truth nor matter of fact, when it is asserted, Act and Test. p. 39. "That our parliament, immediately after the revolution, did appoint the oath of allegiance to be sworn, in place of any other oaths imposed by laws and acts of preceeding parliaments." But 'tis truth and matter of fact, that the oath of allegiance at first, and the oath of abjuration afterwards, are both substitute in the place and room of our solemn covenants, which in our reforming times were reckoned a proper test

test of allegiance to the sovereign; and this I judge is all that is intended by the words of the presbytery in their act and testimony. I shall leave the reader to what I have said upon this, Def. p. 319. which, if he pleases, he may compare with Mr. Currie's reply, Vind. p. 315.

8thly, Says Mr. Currie, 'Tis not fact, when it is asserted, Act and Test. p. 40. *That it was the laudable practice in reforming times to condemn all steps of defection.* To prove that this is not fact, Mr. Currie mentions some things that were not condemned by the assembly 1638, and, amongst others, the supremacy. To which I answer, That the acts of that assembly against Prelacy and the five articles of Perth, and against the civil places and power of kirkmen, were a condemning of former steps of defection; as also the act against the high commission court, and the act concerning yearly general assemblies, were acts that condemned the supremacy.

9thly, Says Mr. Currie, It is not matter of fact, when in the same p. 40. it is affirmed, *That, in former reforming times, it was their laudable practice to censure such as were guilty of public backsliding.* This the presbytery prove by the acts that were past, censuring all the bishops, in the year 1638, who were the ringleaders in the apostasy. The presbytery never assert that every individual who was involved in the guilt of defection and backsliding was censured, but restrict their assertion unto the Prelates who were ringleaders in the apostasy; and if Mr. Currie pleases to look to the Latin history, entitled, *Historia Motuum*, he'll get several instances of censures inflicted upon others who were active in carrying on the course of defection.

10thly, Mr. Currie says, *It is not truth to say, That the assembly 1638 deposed all the bishops; for that assembly only suspended two of them.* To which I reply, That the presbytery in their act and testimony speak according to the title prefixed to the several acts past against the bishops; and I refer the reader to what I have further observed upon this head, Def. p. 320.

11thly, Mr. Currie further alledges, That it is not fact which is said, Act and Test. p. 40. "That, in the reforming period, they returned to the Lord by a particular acknowledgment and confession of the sins of the ministry and of the whole land." And, why is not this fact? "For, says Mr. Currie, in all that period we have no particular acknowledgement of the sins of the ministry, in complying

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"plying with Prelacy, &c." To prove the truth of what is asserted by the presbytery, I refer the reader to the historical account which I give in the Defence of what past in the year 1638; particularly, to the assembly's letter 1640, directed to the churches of Helvetia, a part of which is insert, Def. p. 237. and to the other instances I give of deep humiliation and mourning upon the renovation of the national covenant, Def. p. 241, 242. as also to the speech delivered by the moderator of the assembly 1638, narrated, Def. p. 255, 256. I shall not pursue Mr. Currie further in his exceptions against the Act and Testimony, till he make the above particular condescension which I have craved and demanded. It is like Mr. Currie may tell his reader in his next book, "that his exceptions against the Act and Testimony, which I have not touched, are unanswerable; and that they are, as he speaks, puzzling. But they appear to me as trifling, and as easily answered, as these I have above condescended upon: And I doubt not that such who are truly concerned with the state of matters in the church of Scotland at this time, and who are willing to join the associate presbytery in the confession that they make of our received principles, in opposition to the manifest injuries that have been done them, and the deviations that have been made from them; I doubt not, I say, that such will be in no strait and difficulty about declaring their conjunction with the associate presbytery upon the footing of their judicial Act and Testimony, notwithstanding of the exceptions that Mr. Currie makes unto it, providing they consider the same with judgment, and without prejudice and bias. I shall close this chapter with an observe which Mr. Currie makes, Vind. p. 85. "I know not, for my part, "who can express themselves with so much caution, but sometimes these who are fond to animadvert upon the words of "others, and are critical, may find a handle to grip at."

C H A P. VI.

Wherein some lax Principles are instanced, which are advanced by Mr. Currie, either in his Essay or Vindication.

I Have alledged sometimes in the Defence, that Mr. Currie has vented, in his Essay, some principles concerning church-communion, which I judge to be lax. Mr. Currie thinks fit in his Vindication to return the charge, with an accusation of several anti-reformation principles, which he alledges are asserted in the Defence. I shall briefly consider the anti-reformation principles he charges me with; and then I shall give some particular instances to shew, that I have still ground to accuse him of laxness in principle upon the subject of church-communion.

The first anti reformation principle charged, is laid in the following terms, Vind. p. 4. "It is an anti reformation principle, to assert, with our brethren, That people ought to separate from any church like the church of Scotland." But, as this is a begging the whole of what is in question betwixt Mr. Currie and the associate presbytery, so I reckon I have equal ground to charge him with the following anti-reformation principle, viz. That it is warrantable for us, yea, that we are obliged in duty, to continue in ecclesiastical communion with a church, when, in her ecclesiastical capacity, she departs from reformation once attained unto, and justifies herself in her defections and backslidings, persecuting and casting out of her communion such as endeavour to testify and bear witness against her defections and backslidings, and when she is, in these and the like particular instances, breaking asunder the external bonds and ligaments of ecclesiastical union and communion amongst all her members. This I take to be a principle that runs through the whole of Mr. Currie's Essay and Vindication; and it appears to me to be an anti reformation principle, that is, a principle everasive of that principle upon which our secession from Rome was stated, and a principle directly opposite to the characters of a true church, as they are laid down in our reformed Confessions of Faith.

A second anti-reformation principle, he charges me and all the seceding brethren with is, Vind. p. 32. where he says, *The author of the Defence, and all the brethren, again and again*

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harsh upon this, *That the church of Scotland hath kept in ministerial communion with them, one who had derogate from the essential glory of the Son of God.* He adds, *That, if he is not far mistaken, the brethren would be very hard put to it, to find a scripture for founding a sentence of excommunication against professor Simson, considering what repentance he professed before the assembly.* And then he subjoins, *Here the reverend Mr. Wilson, in his pretended defence of our reformation principles, defends another anti-reformation principle.* Which, says he, appears from the first and second book of discipline, where the obdurate are only to be excommunicate. Mr. Currie also gives the judgment of this church in her directory for church-government and church-censures, as also the judgment of some godly and able ministers, such as Masters Gillespie, Burroughs, &c. who all declare, the impenitent and obstinate are only to be excommunicated. But, according to Mr. Currie, Mr. Simson was a penitent; and therefore Mr. Wilson and the rest of the brethren are guilty of an anti-reformation principle, when they have affirmed, that such a penitent, as Mr. Simson was, should have been excommunicate. To which I briefly answer, *That the reverend principal Haddow, in his preface to his Enquiry, p. 9. which I have quoted already in this Continuation, exculpates Mr. Wilson and all the brethren of the charge that Mr. Currie has laid against them, when he asserts, That Mr. Simson understands his several declarations made before the assembly in a sense consistent with his former papers, and does not ingenuously retract his Arian tenets therein vented.* And here we have another lax or anti-reformation principle maintained by the reverend Mr. Currie in his pretended Vindication of the real reformation-principles of the church of Scotland, *viz.* *That the present judicatories did right, in holding one in ministerial and Christian communion with them, who had derogate from the essential glory of the Son of God, and who had never made an ingenuous retraction of the Arian tenets which he had vented in several papers, during the dependence of the process against him.*

Mr. Currie charges several erroneous principles upon me, on the question between him and me, *Whether or not intruders should be received and acknowledged by the church as her lawful and sent ministers?* Vind. Chap. 5. Sect. 3. But I have considered and answered his accusations upon this head, Chap. 3. Sect. 3. of this Continuation, to which I refer the reader.

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I shall only in this chapter give a few instances of some of Mr. Currie's principles, which appear to me to be lax principles, and the most of them are such, upon which he supports his argument for conjunction with the present judicatories, and against secession from them.

Some of Mr. Currie's lax principles are contained in his answers that he makes to an argument for secession from the present judicatories, as it is stated by Mr. Ebenezer Erskine in his preface to Mr. Guthrie's last sermon, p. 7. The words are, "When the reformation of corruptions, and the purging out of evident scandals. is the only condition demanded, what can be the reason that it is not granted? One of the two must needs be, *viz.* Either because the judicatories will not, or else because they cannot reform. If it be because they will not, they are to be withdrawn from as wicked: If it be because they cannot, or want power, it says, the key of discipline is taken from them, and that they are not Christ's officers and stewards." Mr. Currie alledges, That I argue much to the same purpose, when, Def. pref. p. 7. I say, "What reason can be given, why the present judicatories refuse to discharge their duty, in lifting up a judicial testimony for truth, or why they refuse to set about reformation-work? There must be one of two, I cannot conceive a midst betwixt them; either they will not, or they are hindred to discharge their duty by some outward force and violence upon them. I hope the last cannot be alledged;—therefore no other reason can be given for the conduct of the judicatories, but that they are obstinate in their course and way, and will not reform." Mr. Currie alledges, Vind. p. 349. "That, if he is not far mistaken, the horns of the above dilemma are so broken, that it can neither pierce, draw blood of, nor do the least hurt unto, his Essay on Separation." Let us then enquire how Mr. Currie has broken the horns of the dilemma. He alledges, Vind. p. 14. That it contains "corrupt doctrine, and an error of a dangerous nature." But, how does Mr. Currie instruct this? "For, says he, reformation may be refused by judicatories when they are neither weak nor wicked, but perhaps blind or ignorant, or cannot see the evil of what is complained of." But if a church is blind or ignorant, then I affirm she is both weak and wicked, unless Mr. Currie can alledge that sufficient means of instruction are not given her; and, if he says so, he reflects upon the holy scriptures, as if they were not a sufficient and clear light for directing the judicatories

dicatories of a church at all times, and in all cases, to their duty. Besides, the above doctrine taught by Mr. Currie is both corrupt and dangerous, in regard he doth upon the matter affirm, that a church which refuseth reformation is not to be departed from, if her obstinacy proceeds from her blindness or ignorance; and this I look upon to be a lax principle. And truly, at this rate, the church of Rome is not to be departed from; because it may be alledged, that perhaps she is blind or ignorant, and cannot see the evil of what is complained of.

Mr. Currie has yet a second engine, whereby he endeavours to break the horns of the above dilemma, Vind. p. 15. says he, "Granting a church is obstinate, and will not reform some things; this, in the opinion of sound divines, is not enough to prove she is to be forsaken and deserted, if we be not required to approve of any thing amiss in her." Mr. Currie gives this as his own opinion, Essay, p. 16, 113. as also, Vind. p. 60. where he says, "I own, that, tho' an error should creep into the standards of a church, and an error of some greater importance, if I be not required to approve of it, I could not think it duty to separate from her." If Mr. Currie's words have any significancy at all, they bear, that tho' a church goes on obstinately in a course of defection from the Lord, and will not reform some things, yea, tho' a church should maintain errors of importance in her standards, that is, tho' she should confess and avow them; yet we ought not to depart from ecclesiastical communion with her, unless she require of us to approve of her defections and backslidings. The above principle appears to me to be a very lax one, because, according to the said principle, a profane *syncretism* or coalition with adversaries of truth is established, which all our reformed divines do justly condemn. As also, by the same principle, church-communion is stated upon negative terms; whereas, as I observe, Def. p. 47. "Something positive is required to warrantable church-communion; particularly, a public profession and confession of the truths of God, is one of the peculiar characteristics of the church of the living God: The church, unto which we may warrantably join ourselves, ought to maintain and profess the true doctrine and the true faith; according to a quotation from Mr. Gillespie, Essay, p. 3." And, if a church does not maintain by visible profession the true doctrine and the true faith, she is no more a true church of the living God; and consequently, if a church goes on obstinately in a course of defection, and will not be reform'd,

if

she maintains in her ecclesiastical capacity important errors, it is sinful, unsafe and dangerous to continue in ecclesiastical communion with her.

Mr. Currie has yet a third engine for breaking the horns of the foresaid dilemma; but, in my humble opinion, it is as weak and insignificant as any of the two former. He says, Vind. p. 17. "In answer to Mr. Wilson, I may tell him, The reason, why judicatories do not lift up a judicial testimony, may be, because they do not see it present duty, or this may flow from some prudential considerations; tho' positive duties bind *semper*, yet not *ad semper*." To which I answer, I know no prudential considerations that should hinder the church from testifying against the dishonours done to the Lord Jesus, and the injuries done to his truths and members. As for what are called prudential considerations, these have been and are like to prove the ruin of this church, and a wicked and sinful device, whereby the Redeemer has been robbed of his declarative glory, whereby his crown has been profaned and cast down to the ground, and whereby the present judicatories have lulled themselves asleep in their grievous sin of refusing a proper testimony for Christ and his truths. As for the above Latin phrases which Mr. Currie makes use of, they may amuse some of his readers, but they are a mere blind and fallacy. The meaning of them is, That positive duties bind always, but not at all times. But, when is the time when the keys of government and discipline should be exercised in testifying for Christ? Is it not when corruptions and defections prevail in a church? For my part, I know nothing that should hinder the office bearers of the church, or that can warrantably hinder them, from discharging their duty, if, as I have observed, their meetings for this end are not hindered by outward force and violence. Mr. Currie's above reasoning puts me in mind of the old plea, Hag. i. 2. *The time is not come, the time that the Lord's house should be built.*

A third lax principle, wherewith I charge Mr. Currie, is laid down, Essay, p. 17. where he says, "Albeit there be errors and errors of a hainous nature among some in a church, this is not sufficient ground of separation from that church, nay, not tho' these errors should remain uncensured." I observed, Def. p. 51. That this proposition, as Mr. Currie has laid it, appears to me to be very lax and dangerous; and that because it is one of the special ends and designs of God's erecting and rearing up for himself a visible church in the world,

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that he may be honoured and glorified by a public and open confession and acknowledgement of the truth: Therefore, if any particular visible church shall tolerate in her bowels errors of a hainous nature, and if she refuses in her ecclesiastical capacity to testify against them, she does not answer the end and design of infinite wisdom, love and grace in her erection and constitution; if errors of a hainous nature pass uncensured, and if the judicatories of the church go on obstinately in this course, the house of the living God becomes thereby a den of thieves and robbers, and the church may be a society made up of gross heretics. Tho' I reason to this purpose in the Defence, yet Mr. Currie makes no answer to my reasonings; and yet he pretends to follow me foot for foot, as I have already frequently observed.

A fourth lax principle is contained in the Essay, p. 63. where he proposes the following argument against secession from the judicatories, viz. "That to separate from the church of Scotland at this day, is interpretatively a condemning of Christ the Head of the church, as if he was to be blamed, seeing he yet keeps communion with her." Mr. Currie states his argument thus, Vind. p. 79. "When we separate from a church with which Christ keeps communion, we interpretatively condemn him for keeping communion with them, with whom we cannot have communion." Mr. Currie never once enters into my reasons why I condemn his above proposition, as they are laid, Def. p. 70. particularly, when I observe, "That the sovereignty of grace may be glorified amongst these, whom it is not safe or warrantable for us to hold communion with, as members of the same ecclesiastic body." As also, "That the hidden and secret communications of the grace of the Redeemer are neither the standard nor rule of our duty." Mr. Currie owns that secession from the church of England is warrantable, because she imposes sinful terms of communion: But, does Mr. Currie think, that secession from that church is a blaming the Head of the church, if he communicate his saving grace to such in that church, whom yet we cannot hold church-communion with? Mr. Currie's above assertion appears to me to issue in this principle, That we ought to hold communion with every church, how corrupt soever, unless we can suppose she is such an one as Christ does not communicate his grace unto any of her members; otherwise, according to Mr. Currie, we interpretatively blame Christ for holding communion with such, with whom we cannot hold communion:

But the laxness and tendency of such a principle as this, I leave to the judgment of such as are unprejudiced, and who have not given up themselves unto the greatest lengths of the latitudinarian scheme. Mr. Currie pretends, That several eminent divines support his argument: But his manner of writing puts me in mind of professor Simson's conduct, who always pretended the authority of some considerable orthodox divine for his peculiar doctrines. But, no doubt, Mr. Currie knows an ordinary observation, viz. That, before Pelagius appeared in the world, the primitive fathers used some more unguarded expressions; and I doubt not but that eminent divines have been more unguarded in some expressions about church communion, before the latitudinarian scheme did prevail in the manner it does in the present age.

A fifth lax principle vented by Mr. Currie is, *That omissions are not just ground of separation from a church*, Essay, p. 122. and Vind. p. 102. This I reckon a lax principle, for the reasons I have given, Def. p. 98. which Mr. Currie never pretends to answer.

Sixthly, There is yet another principle advanced by Mr. Currie, which I have ground to quarrel: It is contained in an exception that he makes unto the fifteenth article of our first Confession of Faith; tho' he does not think our reformers had an unsound sense under his quarrelled expression, yet he reckons it contrary to the doctrine delivered in the 16th chapter of our Westminster Confession; he calls it an expression unsound in itself, and says, he could not subscribe it, Vind. p. 60, 61. He says, It seems to favour the Baxterian scheme, and is unsound in itself, Vind. p. 98. Reader, here is a Confession of Faith that has passed thro' all the reformed churches, it has been translated into Latin, it has been joined with the other reformed Confessions in the *Syntagma Confessionum*, it has never (so far as I know) been stigmatized with unsoundness by any reformed divine, till Mr. Currie, who professes to be a member of the established church of Scotland, brings the accusation of unsoundness against it. Our famous and learned countryman, Mr. John Welsh, defends the doctrine contained in the fore said article of our Confession of Faith, in his excellent treatise, entitled, *Popery anatomized*, Sect. 7. and he has not discovered any thing unsound or erroneous in the above article of our Confession. The expressions that Mr. Currie charges with unsoundness are these, Article 15. 1st Confess. *God the Father, beholding us in the body of his Son Christ Jesus,*
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accepteth our imperfect obedience, as it were perfect. The title of this article of our Confession is, *Of the perfection of the law, and the imperfection of man*; Where two points of truth are asserted, in opposition to the corrupt doctrine of the Papists. The first point of truth asserted in the foresaid article is, That the holy law of God is most perfect, in opposition to the Popish doctrine concerning the imperfection of the law of God: The other point of truth asserted in the same article is, "That our nature is so corrupt, so weak, and so imperfect, that we are never able to fulfil the works of the law in perfection." This truth is also laid in direct opposition to the doctrine of the Papists, who teach, That even in this life we may yield perfect obedience to the law of God; yea, that one may do more than is commanded: And upon this erroneous doctrine they build their no less corrupt doctrine concerning works of Supererogation. The Papists object, That, if our works are not perfect, they can never be accepted in the sight of God. Unto which our Confession of Faith answers, with all other reformed divines' "God the Father, beholding us in the body of his Son Christ Jesus, accepteth our imperfect obedience, *as it were perfect*; and covers our works, which are defiled with many spots, with the justice of his Son." Where is now the unsoundness that is in this doctrine? Says Mr. Currie, "The judgment of God being always according to truth, the above doctrine is unsound, and he could not subscribe it." But, is there any thing asserted in the above words of our Confession of Faith, concerning the judgment of God, but what is truth? No, nothing at all. Our Confession does not say, that God judges our imperfect obedience to be perfect: This is evident, when it is expressly asserted, that such works as are accepted are *defiled with many spots*. What is it then that is asserted in our Confession? It is, That our imperfect obedience is accepted, *as it were perfect*. The plain, obvious sense and meaning of the words is, That our imperfect obedience is fully, really and truly accepted in the sight of God, as if it were an obedience without any spot or flaw. And if it is enquired, Whence it comes to pass, that this our imperfect obedience is accepted? our Confession of Faith answers, *God beholdeth us in the body of his Son*: This is an emphatic expression, and a phrase peculiar to that spirit that breathed in reforming times: Our received doctrine is expressed in the above words, namely, That all who believe, are unite to Christ, they are one mystically with him; and

therefore their works that spring from faith, tho' in themselves they are defiled with many spots, are all covered with the righteousness of his Son. And this doctrine is the same with that which is taught in our Westminster Confession of Faith, Chap. 16. Art. 5, 6. Our best works, "as they are wrought by us, they are defiled and mixed with so much weakness and imperfection, that they cannot endure the severity of God's judgment; yet notwithstanding, the persons of believers being accepted thro' Christ, their good works also are accepted IN him." I would willingly know from Mr. Currie what branch of the Baxterian scheme the expressions in our first Confession of Faith either favour, or seem to favour. If it is Mr. Currie's stated judgment, that the imperfect obedience of believers is not accepted *in the body of his Son* Jesus Christ, as it were perfect; he either leaves the Popish objection in its full force against our Protestant doctrine on this head, or he seems to favour the Popish doctrine concerning the merit of good works. But tho' Mr. Currie has rashly accused our Confession of Faith of unsoundness, yet I charitably judge that he is orthodox and sound upon the head mentioned; only it is probable he has, without consideration, licked up this objection against our Confession of Faith, from some who have of late racked their inventions to find out quarrels with our national covenant, wherein our first Confession is expressly recognized.

A *seventh* lax principle concerning church-communion is contained in the answer which he gives to the following question proposed, Def. p. 302, "Whether or not a particular visible church, who have embraced one Confession of Faith, one directory for worship, one form of church-government, may require it of all her members, in order to full communion in all sealing ordinances, that they confess, acknowledge, and swear to abide in the profession and obedience of, the same doctrine, worship, government and discipline?" And then I propose five several questions for clearing and confirming what is intended by the foresaid question. But Mr. Currie, without pretending to answer any of these, gives the following answer to the question as above proposed, Vind. p. 287. "I think a church may require of her members, in order to full communion, as admitting of people to the table of our Lord, that they confess, acknowledge and declare their resolution, in the strength of divine grace, to abide in the profession of the true doctrine, worship, discipline
and

“and government of Christ’s house, contained in the Lord’s word. And I think, says he, the doctrine, worship, &c. of this established church is agreeable thereto, and founded thereon. Yet, adds he, For a world I durst not excommunicate such as evidence themselves to be members of Christ’s body, nor keep them back from the communion of his body and blood, as could not approve of every thing in our constitution.” Then he gives an instance of some in other churches whom he durst not debar from the Lord’s table; and alledges, that what he has expressed just now is the laxest principle that ever I could charge him with.

I must beg leave to make the following observes upon Mr. Currie’s above answer; *1mo*, When Mr. Currie states Christian communion upon a profession of the true doctrine, &c. contained in the Lord’s word, I humbly judge communion is stated in a too general manner: The holy scriptures are indeed perfect, and the primary rule and standard of all church-communion; but yet, such as maintain and profess gross and dangerous errors, will agree to these general terms, *viz.* to profess the true doctrine contained in the Lord’s word. It is well known, that the grossest Heretics pervert and wrest the scriptures to their own destruction. Likewise, when he states communion in the general terms above-mentioned, the necessity and warrantableness of confessions of faith in particular visible churches, whereby the truth is held forth from the word of God, in opposition to the cunning sleight of adversaries, is by this means subverted, or rejected, as a narrowing the terms of Christian communion. When Mr. Currie states Christian communion in the general manner above-mentioned, he may with equal reason give up himself to the practice of our new-fashioned ministers, who never mention our Confession of Faith or Catechisms in baptism, but who take parents engaged in general terms, to educate their children in the principles of the Christian religion contained in the word of God. As also, by the above manner of stating Christian communion, a wide door is opened to a profane mixture in the church, particularly in the partaking of sealing ordinances; in regard such who own and profess scandalous errors, whereby the true doctrine is corrupted, and whereby the order and government of the house of God is subverted, will all agree to profess, that they believe the truth of what is contained in the word of God; and for the reasons mentioned I humbly judge, that, as Mr. Currie states communion

in the above general manner, he vents and maintains another very lax principle.

2dly, Mr. Currie perverts the true state of the question, when he says, He durst not debar such from the Lord's table, who evidence themselves to be members of Christ's body, &c. The question is, Whether or not such as openly and avowedly reject and oppose, whether in principle or practice, such steps of reformation as have been received, avouched, confessed and sworn unto, by a particular visible church; whether or not, I say, such are so far guilty of scandal in that particular visible body, as that they may and ought to be debarred from the Lord's table? And, for illustrating this, I notice the following things; 1st, That matters of scandal are not to be confined to gross violations of the second table of the moral law: I humbly judge, that avowed and gross violations of the first table of the law are no less scandalous, and that they are equally dangerous to the church, as the more gross violations of the second table of the moral law. 2dly, I further notice, our Presbyterian divines justly argue against the Erastians, that if ceremonial uncleanness debarred church members under the Old Testament from eating the passover, then there is equal reason for it, that moral uncleanness in church members, under the New Testament, should exclude them from eating our gospel passover, Numb. v. 2, 3. *Every one that was a leper, every one that had an issue, and whosoever was defiled by the dead, is commanded to be put out of the camp.* And, Numb. ix. 6, 10. certain men, who were defiled by the dead body of a man, were, by the commandment of the Lord, debarred from eating the passover in the appointed season. It cannot be refused, that there might be some such, who might be under the ceremonial uncleanness mentioned, who yet were *Israelites indeed*, and evidenced themselves to be members of Christ's body: And, for the same reason, I humbly judge, that there may be some church members under such moral uncleanness, as may justly keep them back from the Lord's table; and that even some such may evidence themselves to be of that number who shall sit eternally at the King's table above, and yet they must be debarred from the table below, till the scandal and offence that they have given be removed according to the rules of the gospel. And tho' I own, that the greatest tenderness should be used by the office bearers of the church, towards all such as evidence themselves to be members of Christ's body; yet I cannot go in to Mr.

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Currie's general assertion, without some limitation and restriction, to wit, *That such as evidence themselves to be members of Christ body, are not to be kept from the communion of his body and blood*; because even some such may be guilty of such scandals as may justly debar them from the Lord's table, and I know not but they may die under the scandal, and yet notwithstanding shall sit eternally at the King's table above.

3^{tio}. I observe, That there is a difference betwixt the case of such as are members of this particular visible church, and the circumstances of others who may be members of other particular visible churches: As for instance, The testimony for the worship, discipline and government of the Lord's house has been more clearly and more solemnly stated, likewise it has been more particularly avouched and confessed, in this church, than in some other churches; and therefore I humbly judge, that a departing from the worship, government and discipline of the Lord's house, is a more heinous and more scandalous sin in Scotland than in some other churches.

I shall only observe in the last place, That some years ago it was an ordinary practice among some of our ministers, who are (as Mr. Currie speaks, Vind. p. 14.) amongst the tenderest and most zealous in the ministry; I say, It was an ordinary practice among them, when administering the sacrament of the supper, to debar from the table of the Lord, such as opposed, or were enemies to, a covenanted work of reformation. In these or the like terms they expressed themselves. I cannot say whether this was Mr. Currie's practice or not; for I was never witness to his dispensing that holy ordinance in his own church except once, and I do not remember if he expressed himself any way upon this head: But it is well known over all the country, that some who were looked upon, and commended as the strictest ministers, expressed themselves in the manner I have mentioned. Mr. Currie's reasonings appear to me to be levelled against such a practice; and if Mr. Currie, or these who he says were reckoned the strictest ministers, depart from their former practice, it will be to me a lamentable evidence, that Latitudinarian principles are prevailing in the once famous reforming and covenanting church of Scotland.

I shall only name another principle advanced by Mr. Currie, which appears to me to be lax: It is expressed in the following terms, Vind. p. 339. "If church judicatories have

“ any power above or beyond only that which is consultative,
 “ it must at least be this, that their sentences are to be sub-
 “ mitted unto, *tho’ we cannot see the equity of them.*” I refer
 the reader to what I have observed upon this head, chap. 3.
 Sect. 2. of this continuation. I shall only add, That as the above
 principle establishes the doctrine of implicate obedience to the
 judicatories of a church, so it appears to me to be a giving up
 of one main point in controversy betwixt the Popish and Pro-
 testant churches.

I have now given several instances of Mr. Currie’s lax prin-
 ciples upon the head of church communion: Tho’ I had free-
 dom to do it, yet it would be in vain to own the present judi-
 catories so far, as to crave that they might censure Mr. Currie
 for his lax principles; especially when I consider, that they
 have passed many dangerous errors, that have been brought
 to their bar, without a due testimony against them. I shall
 only add, That when I consider how Mr. Currie extenuates
 the public sins and defections of this established church to such
 a measure and degree, that he alledges the seceding brethren
 have not given any sufficient evidences of positive backslidings
 in the judicatories, except some violent intrusions, Vind. p.
 32. and likewise, when he reckons the charge of defections
 and backslidings upon the present judicatories to be slander,
 Vind. p. 45. as also, when I consider the above lax principles
 that he has vented upon church communion; I may justly con-
 clude, that he deserves the church’s censure, rather than the
 support of her public funds in his writings, which ’tis judged
 are appointed for other ends and purposes; and, according to
 the judgment of some who are not seceders, the employing of
 them this way is a gross misapplication of them.



C H A P. VII.

*Concerning the Agreement of the Associate presbytery,
 both in Principle and Practice, with Mr. James
 Guthrie and the Protesters in the former Period.*

THE occasion of the present question is: Mr. Currie,
 in the appendix to his Vindication, asserts, “ That
 “ Mr. Guthrie, and the other protesters in his day,
 “ were as opposite in principle and practice to such Pres-
 “ byterians

"byterians as do separate from the church of Scotland at present, as are Nadir and Zenith, or light and darkness." Vind. p. 345. I shall leave Mr. Currie to the terms of art that he thinks fit to make use of; whether they are fitly applied or not, is not worth while to enquire into. Only I think, that, in writings of this kind, such terms of art, if they have a shew of learning and reading, that is all, they have nothing more.

As for the principles of the associate presbytery, they are fully and plainly laid down in the assertory part of the *act and testimony*, and they are the same with these which were maintained and professed by Mr. James Guthrie and the other protesters in his day. As to the manner of testifying for these principles, the associate presbytery do testify in the same way and manner that the eminent minister Mr. James Guthrie, and the other protesters in his day, did testify; as may appear from the following particular instances.

1^{mo}, The protesters in the former period disowned the authority and constitution of the assemblies that met *anno* 1651 and 1652: Even so the associate presbytery have, upon just and weighty grounds, disowned the authority and constitution of the present judicatories, by their act dated at Edinburgh, May 1739.

2^{do}, Mr. Guthrie, and the other protesters in his day, continued to exercise their ministry, after some of them were deposed by the pretended judicatories at that time. That some of them were deposed, Mr. Currie owns, Vind. p. 160. And I suppose it will not be controverted by any who know the history of our church, that these deposed ministers continued to exercise their ministry in as free and full a manner as formerly: Even so the ministers of the associate presbytery, the most part of them have been prosecuted unto deposition by the pretended assemblies at this day, do continue to exercise their ministry, notwithstanding of the pretended sentence passed against them.

3^{tio}, Mr. Guthrie, and the protesters in his day, met together in distinct judicatories, and exercised the keys of government and discipline in a distinct judicative capacity from these who were called the *public resolutioners*: Even so the seceding ministers exercise the key of government and discipline in a distinct capacity from the present judicatories. This is what Mr. Currie refuses; and he affirms. That Mr. Guthrie, and the other protesters in his day, still contended in a way of church communion, without separation; and that they judg-
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ed it their duty to live in church-communion, and to join in church-judicatories, without associating themselves into presbyteries, synods or assemblies distinct from the then backsliding judicatories. This is a common topic, that runs through Mr. Currie's writings against the present secession from the judicatories; as, Vind. p. 15, 347, 356, &c. And, to satisfy the reader that Mr. Currie's account of the behaviour of the protesters is a mistake, I shall give a few particular instances of their meeting in a distinct judicative capacity from the resolutioners.

When the controversy began in this church, concerning the admitting of malignants into places of public trust; in the presbytery of Linlithgow, there was no meeting of presbytery from the year 1650 till the year 1651. The first meeting of presbytery that was, was a meeting of seven of the protesters who met at Ecclesmachan; and the resolutioners, being one or two supernumerary, met at Bathgate. The resolutioners appointed a conference with the protesters; but, when they declined the conference, the resolutioners caused summon them by their officer in order to censure: but, when the summons was not regarded, the matter was referred to the synod, who at their first meeting delayed it to the ensuing synod, and appointed the protesters and resolutioners to be summoned to compare before them at Linlithgow, May 1652. But, none of the protesters comparing, the resolutioners compared, and were holden by the synod to be the presbytery of Linlithgow; and so they continued in two presbyteries till the restoration. There were three parishes during that time settled, every one of them both by the protesting and resolution side, viz. Linlithgow, Bathgate and Carriden. Mr. William Weir was settled minister at Linlithgow by the protesting presbytery: He returned to Linlithgow, and died minister there, after the revolution. Mr. William Crichton, who was minister of Edinburgh after the revolution, and who was moderator of the second general assembly thereafter, was ordained by the protesting presbytery minister at Bathgate. Who was ordained minister at Carriden I am not informed, neither am I informed who were the three ministers who were ordained by the resolution presbytery. In the parish of Bathgate they had two different places of worship: Likewise in the church of Linlithgow they had two different places of worship; they had also two different sessions there. The records of both sessions are lying, as I am informed, in the hands of the present clerk. The registers of the two different

ferent presbyteries are yet extant. The protesters register is in the hands of a reverend minister of that presbytery, and the register of the public resolutioners is in the hands of the present clerk of presbytery; and, as I am informed, this register bears plainly, that the protesters had constitute themselves into a presbytery, and called themselves by the name of the presbytery of Linlithgow. Likewise, in the presbytery of Stirling, the protesters and the public resolutioners met in distinct presbyteries; the protesters met in presbytery at Stirling, and such as were public resolutioners met at Alloa. Allo, in the presbytery of Auchterardice, the protesters met in a distinct presbytery from the resolutioners. The register of the synod of Perth and Stirling for that period clears the fact which I have mentioned. But, not to insist upon such particular instances, the public resolutioners bear testimony to the truth of the fact which I assert against Mr. Currie, in their paper intitled, *The protestation given in to the general assembly, July 21st 1652.* p. 6. where they say, "They (*viz.* the protesters) meeting then in Edinburgh without order, after a little pause, did constitute themselves in an ecclesiastical judicatory, wherein magisterially they define things so prejudicial to us, as not only perfectly obstructed all peace, but also sounded the alarm to a new conflict, by emitting a paper, wherein they peremptorily conclude, among the chief causes of the Lord's controversy with the land, the public resolutions, and the preceding assembly, to have a special place." The paper mentioned is writ on the resolution side, and therefore the above expressions are in a stile reflecting upon the protesters. But however, we may gather from them the following plain facts; *1^{mo}*, That the protesters did meet at Edinburgh, and did constitute themselves into an ecclesiastical judicatory distinct from those of the public resolutioners. *2^{do}*, That the protesters did exercise the keys of government and discipline in a distinct judicative capacity: And this they did three ways; *1st*, They condemned the preceding assembly. *2^{dly}*, They condemned the public resolutions; which two they judicially condemn, as having a special place in the chief causes of God's controversy with the land. *3^{dly}*. They emit a paper containing their above conclusions; and this is the same upon the matter with the proceedings of the associate presbytery, in emitting their *act and testimony*. And, from the instances that I have given, I humbly think it appears, that Mr. Currie is much mistaken, when he affirms

as above, That Mr. Guthrie and the other protesters judged it their duty to join in church judicatories, without associating themselves into presbyteries distinct from the resolutioners: As also, I think it appears, that the practice of the seceding ministers is not quite unprecedented, when they have associated themselves into a presbyterial meeting, and have emitted an *act, declaration and testimony for Scotland's* covenanted reformation.

I have done with what I intend at this time upon Mr. Currie's *Vindication*. If I had taken notice of every thing that deserved censure in his book, I might soon have doubled his large *Vindication*; but, tho' I have written only about the half of what Mr. Currie's *Vindication* contains, yet I am afraid I may be justly blamed for writing so much upon a book, in which the case of the seceding ministers is with so much ill-nature misrepresented, and where the question is still mis-stated, as also, where the argument is always shifted. When the reverend Mr. Currie says, That his design is not to add oil to the flame, Vind. p. 1. I can also safely say, That my design in writing is not to fret any, and far less is it to kindle or cherish a consuming fire or flame of division. I sincerely wish that I could get my own soul rouzed up, and others excited, unto a due concern for the declarative glory of our Redeemer, which is so much veiled by the present judicatories; and all sorts of persons in our land; as also, that both I myself and others were awakned to a humbling sense of the dishonours and indignities that have been done to our Lord Jesus, and the truth as it is in him; and likewise, that the dross of defection and backsliding may be consumed, and that glory may dwell in our land. I can in some measure of singleness and simplicity say, that these are the ends which I desire to pursue in writing upon this subject, tho' I am very sensible that in all my writings, and particularly upon this subject, I very much fail and come short in following these ends.

Mr. Currie, in the page above-quoted, observes, That controversial writings may thro' the divine blessing issue in peace, when managed and read with that spirit of love and meekness that becomes the gospel. But I am far mistaken if Mr. Currie's writings have any tendency towards a true and desirable peace: And however strong Mr. Currie's disposition was to take the field at first upon this controversy; yet I am likewise very much mistaken if he had not done more for true peace, if he had followed the advice of some of his judicious brethren, and shut up his papers in his closet, without ever

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troubling the world with them. However, I hope, that, after the question about secession from the present judicatories has been so much tossed, our *gracious God, of whom are all things*, will bring glory to his own great name, honour to his truth, and edification to the body of Christ, out of the present debate. I join with Mr. Currie, when in the same page he says, "It is to be lamented, our time should be spent in such debates and controversies, which might be improved to better purpose." But in the mean time, when truth is opposed from the press, and since the cause, which I hope is the Lord's, is misrepresented, and run down, in such a confident and boasting manner as is done by Mr. Currie, and under such countenance and support as is given him by the judicatories; I judge it my duty to cast in my mite for the Vindication of this cause against such gainsayers. I desire to pray with my whole soul, that the reverend Mr. Currie may be graciously reclaimed from his lax principles concerning church-communion; and that he may see his sin in extenuating our public defections and backslidings, after the manner I have frequently observed he has done; and that both he, and all, and every one of us, and all sorts of persons in the land, may receive the promise of the *Spirit of grace and supplication*, that we may look upon him whom we have pierced, and may mourn; and that we may all return to the Lord, from whom the judicatories, and all ranks of persons in the land, have deeply revolted.



POSTSCRIPT.

WHEN the most part of the sheets of this Continuation were cast off the press, a printed Letter came to hand, directed for me, from the reverend Mr. John Lawson minister of the gospel at Closeburn. He complains, in some lines prefixed to his printed Letter, that he had writ me several times upon the very important subject of our secession, but had received no answer. If the reverend Mr. Lawson has writ several times upon the subject mentioned, his letters have not come to my hand: It is more as two years since I received any letter from

from him before this came to me, which he has now published, and which is dated December 16th 1740, and I did not receive it till the last week of January thereafter. I was credibly informed about the latter end of March, that a copy of it was in Glasgow, in order to be printed; and therefore I thought it proper to supersede any answer unto it, until I should see it from the press; especially when it was not above six weeks in my hand, when Mr Lawson had declared his intention of publishing it; and now he hath published it, with an appendix and postscript: The appendix is also directed for me, tho' I never saw it till it came from the press. He gives the following reason for publishing his letter, viz. "That, receiving no answer, he thought himself obliged to publish his Letter, for the information and warning of all the Separatists from this church, &c." But I humbly judge, he might have saved his labour, in regard he hath not advanced any thing new, and hath writ nothing but what Mr. Currie hath said before in his *Essay and Vindication*: Only the reverend Mr. Lawson sometimes exceeds Mr. Currie in warmth of expression, and writes with less guard and caution.

Mr. Lawson, in his warning that he gives unto Separatists, proceeds upon some of these lax principles which, as I have observed, Mr. Currie adopts in his *Essay and Vindication*: As for instance, he asserts, Letter, p. 3. *That no member should separate from a church that has been a true church of Christ, until they cannot remain any longer in it without sin, or are in hazard of being involved in sin, either by being obliged to approve of something that is bad, or condemn something that is good, &c.* This is a principle that runs thro' Mr. Lawson's Letter, and I have observed it is a lax principle, Def. p. 55. where I give my reasons against it; as also, chap. 6. of this Continuation. I shall only add, That, according to Mr. Lawson's above principle, if a church has been a true church of Christ, tho' she should degenerate so far, as not to have any just claim to the characters of a true church, yet, if she does not require of us an express approbation of her steps of defection, we ought to continue in ecclesiastical communion with her; consequently, tho' her steps of defection be never so gross, we are to own and acknowledge ourselves members of the same ecclesiastical body. At this rate, ecclesiastical communion ought to be maintained with the most corrupt and degenerate churches, upon the condition mentioned: But this is quite contrary to the principles of the reformed churches

concerning church-communion, as their principles are laid down from the word of God, where they give the characters of true churches, or such churches with whom we may warrantably join ourselves in ecclesiastical communion.

I must further observe upon this head, That, as his above principle is laid, it seems it is his opinion, that the only way of being involved in sin, while we continue in communion with a corrupt church, is, by a formal and express approbation of her sins and defections; whereas there are many other ways by which we may be involved in sin, by our continued conjunction with a backsliding church: As for instance, if our conjunction with a backsliding church doth strengthen the hands of the backsliding body, or if it hinders us from the discharge of any positive duties, which our station, office or character does oblige us unto; in these or other instances that might be mentioned, our continued union and conjunction with a corrupt church, not only brings us in hazard of sin, but actually involves us in sin, even tho' there be no express approbation of their sin.

Another principle advanced by Mr. Lawson is, "That no member should separate from a church that has been a true church of Christ, unless some one or other sinful term of communion is imposed upon them." With respect to the present judicatories of this national church, I have shown, Def. Chap. 2. Sect. 4. that, by some acts and deeds of the present judicatories, sinful and unwarrantable terms of communion are imposed upon the members of this church; as also, that a conjunction with the judicatories of this church, doth in its own nature involve ministers in the omission of such duties as their office and station doth oblige them to, Def. p. 132, 133. I further illustrate and confirm the same, Chap. 3. Sect. 5. of this Continuation. But with respect to Mr. Lawson's above principle, That we are not to separate from a church unless there be some sinful term of communion imposed, it is laid down, Letter, p. 3. and also runs thro' his whole Letter; I look upon it to be a lax principle, and I have given my reasons for this, Def. p. 47, 48, 49. to which I refer. Since Mr. Lawson hath thought fit to adopt the above principle, I shall only put him in mind, that he states church communion upon negative terms, whereas something positive is required unto warrantable church communion, and our reformed divines have always stated church communion upon positive terms; and Mr. Lawson's contrary principle lies open to the absurdities

dities I mention in the place of the Defence directed unto:

Mr. Lawson follows Mr. Currie, in pleading that we ought not to separate from a true church, where there is no sinful term of communion imposed; as Letter, p. 15, 16. But neither he nor Mr. Currie have ever given the reader the determinate sense and meaning of the terms *true church*. Mr. Lawson in his Letter, p. 16. says, "You do what you can" in your defence to prove that the church of Scotland is not "a true church of Christ. But I endeavour, Def. p. 41, 42, to explain the terms *true church*; and I own, if *true church* is taken in a large sense, then many churches, that are most corrupt and degenerate, may be called *true churches*: As for instance, the church of England, in the large sense of the terms, is a *true church*. But if the terms *true church*, are taken strictly, for such churches as have the characters of true churches, laid down in our reformed Confessions of Faith; then I refuse that this national church, as she is represented in her present judicatories, is a true church of Christ. Mr. Lawson subjoins to his words above quoted, "But I am of opinion you exceedingly misrepresent the matter." But he should have told wherein I have misrepresented the matter. He tells me, It is his opinion that I have done so; and, frequently thro' his Letter and Appendix, he tells his reader, he thinks so and so, or such is his opinion as if he judged his opinions or thoughts were sufficient to convince me or others: But if he had answered the end which he says he proposes to himself in publishing his Letter, viz. the information and warning of all the Separatists, and of all the professors of our holy religion; he should have given some particular instances, wherein I *exceedingly misrepresent* the matter. He alledges, Mr. Currie has proven in his Vindication, that the church of Scotland is a true church, and that there is not the least ground of separation from her. Since he refers me to Mr. Currie for proof of the charge that he lays against me, of exceedingly misrepresenting the matter, I have equal reason, in answer to his charge, to refer Mr. Lawson to what I have said in the Defence, and in this Continuation.

Mr. Lawson asserts, "That tho' the plurality of churches, ministers and people, and the great plurality also, should be going on in a course of defection, yet there may not be the least ground of separation from her, in case there be no sinful terms of communion imposed." This, he thinks is undeniably plain from the case and circumstance of the church

of the Jews in many periods, and also from the case of the Christian church of Corinth, Galatia, &c. Letter, p. 6. App. p. 27. And here Mr. Lawson argues in the same way that Mr. Currie does before him: The prophets under the Old Testament, Christ and his apostles under the New Testament, continued to join in communion with the church of the Jews, notwithstanding of manifold corruptions and defections; therefore it is unwarrantable to make secession from very degenerate and corrupt churches, if there be no sinful terms of communion imposed. This, I suppose, is the argument in its full force and strength, as it is laid by Mr. Currie and Mr. Lawson against our present secession. But I observe, Def. p. 281. That the argument is stated after the same manner by the Papists against the secession of the Protestant churches from them: And indeed the argument, as it is laid above, comes out with equal force against the secession of the Protestant churches from Rome. As for instance, Do we depart from ecclesiastical communion with Rome, because she is corrupt and unsound in doctrine? The Papists can tell us, The generality of the Jewish doctors and teachers were most degenerate and corrupt in their doctrine; *They made the commandment of God of none effect by their traditions; they taught for doctrines the commandments of men*, Mat. xv. 6, 9. Do the Protestant churches alledge that they depart from communion with Rome, because she is tyrannical in government? The Papists can tell us, *Jerusalem killed the prophets, and stoned them that were sent unto her*. If the Protestants shall yet further alledge, The church of Rome imposes sinful and unwarrantable terms of communion; the Papists may reply, The Jewish Sanhedrim did impose the most sinful and wicked term of communion, when they enacted, That, *if any man did confess Christ, he should be put out of the synagogue*, i. e. excommunicated, John ix. 22. And I humbly judge, that neither Mr. Currie nor Mr. Lawson can answer the reasonings of the Papists, according to the above way and manner in which Mr. Lawson has laid the argument; and therefore, in order to answer effectually the above subterfuges of the Papists, the peculiar state of the Jewish church is to be considered, and the different state of the New-testament church from that of the Jewish: This is what our reformed divines do, and this is what I have endeavoured to do, Def. p. 180, 181. and Chap. 3. Sect. 5 of this Continuation. And if Mr. Lawson will grant that we ought not to maintain communion with a

church where sinful terms of communion are imposed (and this is what he does own, and must own, if he is consistent with himself in his Letter) I can prove at the same time, according as he lays the argument from the church of the Jews, that we ought to maintain ecclesiastical communion with a church, even when sinful and unwarrantable terms of communion are imposed. And, if Mr. Lawson would write for the real information of these whom he calls Separatists, I wish that in his next he would give some distinct and satisfying answer to the above difficulty, yea, gross absurdity, with which his argument is pressed. With respect to the churches mentioned under the New Testament, where errors and corruptions had crept in; unless Mr. Lawson can prove that a course of defection was carried on by these several churches in their ecclesiastical capacity, and that they justified themselves in the same, and refused to reform, after admonitions, warnings and reproofs given them; unless, I say, Mr. Lawson undertake to prove this, he speaks neither against the question nor argument as I have stated them.

Mr. Lawson, Letter, p. 19. regrets it as a thing lamentable, that some well-meaning people know nothing to purpose of the terms of church communion, or of the just grounds of separation. He also observes the same thing, App. p. 24. I join with Mr. Lawson, and I think it is lamentable that many, who have the root of the matter in them, have so little knowledge of the true scriptural terms of church-communion; and hence it is, that there is so much of a blind conjunction as members of the same ecclesiastical body with judicatories who carry on a course of defection and backsliding from the Lord, and who refuse to be reclaimed, after the ordinary means have been used for this effect; and I am afraid ministers are highly culpable, and may be justly charged with cherishing and supporting such blindness and ignorance, when they advance and maintain the above or the like lax principles, concerning church-communion, which I have mentioned.

There is one thing I must notice, which Mr. Lawson confidently asserts, viz. "That, between the years 1638 and 1649, these meetings that are called society-meetings, were discharged;" I suppose, he means by the assemblies of this church. These meetings that go under the name of society-meetings, are meetings of a few for joint prayer, and for conference with one another, for their mutual instruction and edification; and I affirm, that such meetings were never discharged

charged in any period of this church. And tho' meetings of this kind, as well as any other ordinance of God, may be abused; yet, to discharge such meetings, would be to fly in the face of their warrant from scripture pattern and example, as Mal. iii. 16. And I reckon that Mr. Lawson throws a reproach upon this church, when he affirms so positively, that such meetings were discharged during the period he mentions. As for the assembly's directory for secret and private worship, anno 1647, no such meetings as I have mentioned are discharged; but the meetings of persons of diverse families, which had a tendency to the hindrance of the religious exercise of each family by itself, or which were to the prejudice of the public ministry, are justly disapproved.

Mr. Lawson thinks fit to represent the present judicatories as a reforming church, particularly after the year 1733; he alledges matters were grown much better since that time, Letter, p. 13. But I have given several instances, Def. Chap. 2. Sect. 6. wherein I shew, that, instead of being better, the present judicatories are, in the instances which I mention, worse since the foresaid year. I illustrate this with respect to some of these instances, Chap. 3. Sect. 4. of this Continuation. Mr. Lawson complains of the seceders, That they have by a violent schism put all into confusion, App. p. 29. That they have hindred and crushed in the very bud a glorious begun work of reformation, App. p. 26. These are very heavy charges against the seceding ministers; but in the mean time they are most unjust. And this appears, if we consider what is advanced by Mr. Lawson in the page last quoted, where he says, *I believe, that the far greatest part of the ministers and elders of this church are grieved for all the above corruptions and defections that are therein, and are much for a work of reformation, and against defection.* I wish sincerely it were so; but I want to see a ground for this faith which Mr. Lawson doth express: I am afraid, if the testimony of most be taken, it will amount to this, that there is no such thing as defections or corruptions in this church. If Mr. Lawson believes, that the far greatest part of the ministers and elders of this church are of the disposition he mentions; I ask him, How could the secession of such a small number hinder, crush or stop a glorious begun work of reformation? Nay rather, if such a work of reformation was stopt, it is an evidence that the greatest part by far had not reformation-work at heart: And tho' I doubt not but some have been and are truly desir-

ous of reformation, yet I am much afraid that the great things which Mr. Lawson boasts have been done, have been rather a political feint amongst many, than a steady resolution to go on in reformation-work; and the proceedings of the two late pretended assemblies confirm me in this suspicion.

Mr. Lawson lays several general charges against the seceders, such as, *That severals of their pamphlets for separation are stuffed with the greatest falsehoods and calumnies that the father of lies or the corruption of men can invent: That the word of God is wofully misapplied, wrested and abused, to serve the corrupt purposes and designs of men, &c.* Letter, p. 15. And he concludes his postscript with affirming, *That the seceders have been left to make many wide and unwarrantable steps, very inconsistent with our reformed covenanted principles, and the true design and interest of the glorious gospel.* When the above general charges are laid without any particular condescension, they deserve no manner of notice or regard: They discover indeed the spirit of the letter-writer; but they can neither convince nor inform these he calls Separatists. Mr. Lawson thinks fit to express himself in a very warm and keen manner against the seceding ministers; he rails upon them as schismatics; he charges them with causing great disorders, with rendring evil for good; he alledges they are become the instruments to set fire further into God's sanctuary, and to raise the flame, when the anger of the Lord has divided us, Letter, p. 13. I shall leave him to please himself in such railing; only I must tell him, That if he writes me again with so little reason and argument, and in a stile that favours of so much rancour, he must excuse me if I do not notice his letters, whether he thinks fit to publish them or not.

The reverend Mr. Lawson concludes his Appendix with a few advices, as he calls them, to ministers, elders, and all church-officers and others. Tho' I will not in a writing of this kind take upon me the character of an exhorter to ministers, yet I approve of the most of the advices that Mr. Lawson gives; and I wish particularly that his first were followed, namely, That ministers and elders would adhere to, maintain and contend for, all the parts of the doctrine, worship, discipline and government of this church, and the whole of our valuable covenanted reformed principles, cost us what it will: I am persuaded, that, if the present judicatories were shewing an uniform disposition this way, the present secession would soon be at a desirable period. I join with him like-
wise

wise in the advice which he gives in the words of Solomon, App. p. 34. *Be not righteous over much, neither make thyself over wise.* I reckon, self confidence, and leaning to our own wisdom, the root and spring of many evils both in walk and practice; and particularly, of such an union and communion with a backsliding and degenerate church, whereby the Redeemer is robb'd of the glory of a particular, full and free confession of him, in opposition to the injuries and indignities that may be done him in his person, truths and members: And therefore, whereas Mr. Lawson *intreats the repentance and reformation of all seceders, and that they may join in communion with this church in as honourable and good terms as can be obtained:* In return to his advice, I judge it is the duty of all the seceders earnestly to pray, that the spirit of repentance and reformation may be poured out upon the present judicatories, and all such as are in conjunction with them, yea, upon all sorts of persons in our land, whether seceders or not: Until repentance and reformation take place, it is in vain to think of a desirable and lasting union. And may the same Spirit of grace be given to all the seceders that they may abide singly, steadily and humbly in the confession which they profess to make of the truths of our Lord Jesus Christ, in opposition to that current of lukewarmness, defection and backsliding, that runs with such force and violence in the present day and time!

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LETTER

FROM A

Member of the ASSOCIATE PRESBYTERY

TO A

Minister in the Presbytery of D---ne.

WHEREIN

The Question, concerning SECESSION
from the present Judicatories, is stated
and examined.

WITH A

POSTSCRIPT,

CONTAINING

Some Remarks on the Rev. Mr. CURRIE'S
Essay on SEPARATION.

G L A S G O W:

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LETTER

From a Member of the ASSOCIATE
PRESBYTERY to a Minister in the
Presbytery of D---NE.

R. D. B.

I Should have given a return to yours of the 23d January last sooner; but I was hindred, partly thro' bodily indisposition, and partly thro' a throng of other work upon my hands. You grant, that what I wrote you concerning the conduct of the present judicatories since the year 1734 is *a sad truth, to wit, That reformation-work hath not been at heart, at least, with the most part: And likewise you own, That indignities have been done in former years to the exalted Redeemer, both in his person and offices, by the assembly's proceedings with Mr. Simson, and of late with Mr. Campbell: As also, That the Head of the church has been dishonoured by the late act of parliament, and by ministers reading it as appointed: and that judicatories have not duly testified against it.* I may add, They have not in the least testified in their judicative capacity against the injury done thereby to the Redeemer's crown and kingdom. But yet, so far as you have hitherto understood the only rule to direct and guide in difficult cases, you write, That, when you consider some particular scripture-instances that you mention, you are naturally led to think, that communion may be held with churches very corrupt, and especially with such as have given no testimony at all against gross heretics and the heresies taught by them; and consequently, as your missive imports, you do not see it to be your duty, from the Lord's word, to bear testimony against the sins, errors and backslidings of the present times, in the way of secession from the judicatories of this national church.

Dr. Br. I am heartily sorry that we should have different sentiments about the matter of testifying for the injured truths of Christ in this *day of perplexity and treading down in our valley of vision.* I own, that, after the meeting of the assembly

bly

bly 1734, I was in much perplexity about our continuing a state of secession; it occasioned many thoughts of heart to me, to understand what was duty in the present case: But as I had no hesitation about my duty when I did, together with my other three brethren, declare a secession from the present judicatories of this church, in our protestation entered before the commission of the general assembly November 1733 so, when I have observed the conduct of the said judicatories since the year 1734, how, instead of returning to the Lord they have gone further back, that I fear that word may be justly applied to them, Jer. viii. 4, 5. *Thus saith the Lord Shall they fall and not arise?—Why then is this people of Jerusalem flidden back by a perpetual backsliding? They hold fast deceit, and refuse to return;* I have been gradually cleared and more and more confirmed, that it is our duty to continue in a state of secession from them. I should not have troubled you further on this subject; but since you have been pleased to give me a hint at the scripture grounds and reasons which you judge to be of weight with you to determine you to continue in conjunction with the present judicatories, I judge it my duty, with all brotherly and Christian freedom and tenderness, to lay more fully before you some considerations that have cleared my way, and by which I have been confirmed, in judging it my duty to concur with my brethren in testifying judicially, and in a way of secession from the present judicatories, against former and present backsliding and defections that this whole church and land stand chargeable with: And if my views are wrong, or if my reasoning are not just, I am willing to be set right from the only unerring rule, the law and the testimony; and I desire, if my heart deceive me not, to lay open unto light from the Lord's word.

The question betwixt us is, concerning communion with the present judicatories of this national church, Whether it is our duty to continue to testify against a course of backsliding and defection in a way of union and conjunction with them, and as parts of one and the same ruling and governing body? Or if it is not rather our duty to *come out from among them*, and to bear testimony to injured truth in a way of secession from them? That we may have a more clear and distinct view of the present question, I beg leave to observe a few things wherein I hope we shall both agree.

1st, There

1st, There is a vast difference betwixt a church pointing towards reformation, or striving to maintain what purity she has attained unto; and a church that is losing her purity, and declining from such steps of reformation as she has mercifully reached, and also justifying herself in her backslidings and defections: In the former case, many things that are wrong and defective ought to be patiently born; but in the latter case, that is, when a church is losing her purity, and declining from steps of reformation attained unto, her backslidings ought to be testified against: And if she is justifying her backslidings, and refusing to return unto the Lord; and especially, if she justify herself in these, in the face of representations and remonstrances against her iniquities; then a more solemn testimony against her is needful, Jer. xv. 19. *And if thou take forth the precious from the vile, thou shalt be as my mouth: Let them return unto thee, but return not thou unto them.*

2^{dly}, When we speak of a testimony for truth, the question is not, If a perfect testimony can be given by any set of men whatsoever in any period of the church against error or backsliding from the Lord? All our testimonies and witnessings whether judicial or extrajudicial, as well as all our preachings and prayers, have their corrupt mixture; they are still defective either in the matter or manner, or in both; they all bear the print of our foul fingers upon them: The honour of giving a perfect testimony to truth belongs to the Head and Captain of our salvation; he alone is the faithful and true Witness; his testimony has a perfection both of parts and degrees, there is nothing wrong and nothing defective in it. But,

3^{dly}, The question is, Whether or not, when a church is declining and backsliding from the purity that she has once attained unto, such a testimony may and ought to be given unto injured and oppressed truth, as bears some proportion unto the injury that is done by the backsliding party unto the truth? A testimony of this kind is what I call an adequate testimony. In yours, you make an adequate and perfect testimony the same thing: I shall not contend about words; If you think the word *adequate* improper, I shall easily part with it; only I humbly judge, that, in a declining period of the church, such a testimony may and ought to be given (especially by such office bearers of the church who desire to be found faithful unto the Lord) as bears some proportion unto the injury that is done to truth, by the party who are carrying on
a course

a course of backsliding: And therefore, when the judicatories of a church let go any of the truths of Christ, or deviate from any thing that has been adopted as a point of truth agreeable to the word of God, whether it concerns the doctrine, worship, government or discipline of the Lord's house, a testimony against them is necessary. And, that the testimony may bear some proportion to the injury that is done to truth, the following things appear to me to be needful.

1. That such as aim at witnessing for the truth, bear plain and express testimony to every one of the truths that are opposed: They ought to maintain and assert the truth, in direct opposition unto the terms in which it is impugned or denied.

2. It is likewise needful, that they point out the particular steps of deviation or backsliding, so far as they can discern in a church or her judicatories, from points of reformation once attained unto: Both these are necessary from the Lord's express command, Rev. ii. 25. *But that which ye have already, hold fast till I come.* Rev. iii. 11. *Hold that fast which thou hast.* They are necessary for the conviction of such as are carrying on the course of backsliding, and as means of their recovery, Lev. xix. 17. They are necessary for the confirmation and establishment of such as love the truth, and who desire to cleave to it, Heb x. 23, 24. In a word, no point of truth once received should be knowingly let go, and no public sin should be wilfully covered or palliate. If we set our thumb upon any divine truth, or conceal any public sin, from any carnal or political considerations, we grieve the Spirit of truth, and are unfaithful unto the trust committed unto us, Isa. lxiii. 8, 10.

3. A testimony ought to be given to truth in the same public and express manner in which the course of backsliding is carried on; otherwise the testimony bears not a due proportion unto the injury that is done to truth. As for instance, When truth is opposed from the press, if the press is open it ought to be defended from the press; and, in some cases, this may be reckon'd a testimony bearing a proportion unto the injury that is done to truth. Again, when truth is doctrinally opposed, it ought to be doctrinally maintained and asserted: This may likewise in some cases be reckoned a testimony bearing some proportion to the injury that is done to truth. Again, when the keys of government and discipline

are perverted by the office-bearers of the church, and when they in their judicative capacity, instead of censuring the erroneous, do either screen or protect them; and, instead of asserting and maintaining the truth, do pass error without a testimony against it; and when, instead of supporting the flock and heritage of God in these privileges and liberties where-with Christ has made them free, they oppress, break and scatter them; then such as desire to be found faithful to the Lord, if they have access to meet together, ought in a judicial capacity to bear testimony to the truth, and vindicate the liberties of the flock of Christ: Otherwise their testimony cannot be reckoned to bear a proportion to the injury done to truth, or the violence and oppression done to the Lord's heritage. Yet I observe, in the

4th place, That when the bulk and body of the office-bearers of the church carry on a course of defection, and when the smaller part are only grieved with their proceedings, they ought to use proper means for reclaiming their sinning and offending brethren before they associate together by themselves for the exercise of the keys: It may be necessary to deal with them to return to their duty, by petitions, representations, or doctrinal testimonies against them. These and the like means may be warrantably used, and in some cases it is duty to use them, before the smaller part associate together for the exercise of the keys of government and discipline.

5. When the smaller part, that desire to keep the word of the Lord's patience, have tried the above and the like means without success; and when, notwithstanding of remonstrances in judicatories and doctrinal testimonies against them, the majority of the office-bearers of a church go on resolutely in a course of defection from the Lord; then it is the duty of such who desire to be found faithful, tho' they may be few in number, to associate together for the exercise of the keys of government and discipline, for the ends for which they are committed unto them by the glorious Head of the church: And in this case (call it a secession, or give it any other name you please) the smaller part, who desire to discharge their duty, and to be faithful to the trust committed to the office-bearers of the house of God, depart not from the church, nor from the ordinances and institutions of Christ, but leave the corrupt and backsliding part, and endeavour to do what they are commanded to do, and what all ecclesiastical judicatories

tories ought to do, as they would approve themselves unto the Head of the church, and as they would answer the end and design of their appointment and institution in the New Testament church, which is for the support and design of the truth, 1 Tim. iii. 11. and *for the edification* (not for the destruction) *of the body of Christ*.

But in regard you judge that matters are not as yet come to this pass in the present judicatories, that the smaller part ought to leave the backsliding part, and associate together for the exercise of the keys of the Lord's house; therefore, the question betwixt us comes to this, Whether or not, as the judicatories of this national church are at present situate, it is duty to contend in a way of conjunction or communion with them; or if it is not rather duty for the sincere (tho' the smaller) part to leave the corrupt part, and to associate together for the exercise of the keys of government and discipline, according to the word of God, and the acts and constitutions of the church of Scotland agreeable thereto; that so they may in a judicial capacity bear testimony to the truths of Christ against the injuries done to the same; and also that they may bear testimony in the said capacity unto the rights, liberties, and privileges of the subjects of Christ's spiritual kingdom, against the violence done them by the present judicatories; and that they may contribute their endeavours for their relief in their present oppressed, broken and scattered circumstances thro' the land? You think the former is duty, namely, that you ought to contend in a way of conjunction with the judicatories, I suppose by petitions and representations given in to them, by reasonings against them, and by dissents from their backsliding courses. Before I consider the scripture-instances you adduce to support your judgment and practice, allow me to offer a scripture-argument or two for the latter, namely, That such is the situation of the present judicatories of this national church, that all who desire to be found faithful unto the Lord ought to leave them, and to associate themselves together for holding up and maintaining a testimony in a judicative capacity against the present course of backsliding and defection.

1st, The present judicatories are carrying on, in their judicative capacity, a course of backsliding and defection from the Lord; and consequently they are perverting the keys of government and discipline to ends and purposes quite opposite to these for which they are committed unto them by the

Head

Head of the church: Or, their authority is exercised, not for the edification of the body of Christ, but for their destruction; and this is done, notwithstanding the ordinary means have been used to reclaim them: Therefore it is unsafe and dangerous for you to continue in conjunction with them. I know you will readily grant, that a course of backsliding and defection has been carried on by the judicatories in their judicative capacity: The erroneous have been brought to their bar, and either assolizied from process, as in Mr. Campbell's case, or dismissed with a slight censure, as in Mr. Simson's case; they have refused to assert the truth in plain and express terms, in opposition to the scheme of dangerous errors vented by these men, neither have their errors been expressly condemned. By these means error is supported and countenanced, and truth is born down and oppressed, likewise a lordly dominion is exercised over the heritage of God thro' the land. The crown rights of the Redeemer have also been openly invaded by the late act of parliament appointed to be read in the churches, and the most part of the ministers of Scotland have given obedience to the said act, and there is a deep silence in all the judicatories about the injury that is done to the Redeemer's crown and dignity thereby. These things you will readily acknowledge: And you cannot refuse that the judicatories have been dealt with by instructions, petitions and remonstrances; not only by inferior judicatories unto several general assemblies, but also by a considerable body of ministers, elders and private Christians thro' the land. These means were essay'd, till four ministers were thrust out from communion with the judicatories by act of assembly 1733; and that because they protested for their just right and privilege of testifying, on all proper occasions, against the backslidings and defections of this church: And the judicatories, to this very day, do not shew the least willingness to take with their iniquities, or to acknowledge the same before the Lord; they still refuse to be ashamed, tho', for many years bypast, the course of backsliding has been carried on with a high hand, notwithstanding of many remonstrances against the same. Therefore, since this is the state of matters with the judicatories of this national church, it is unsafe and dangerous for you to continue in communion and conjunction with them; and that because, *first*, While you and others continue among them, you are parts and members of that ruling and govern-

ing body, who are carrying on with a high hand a course of defection from the Lord, and refuse to be reclaimed: You are in this respect one lump with them. The apostle's reasoning is very strong, *Know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump?* 1 Cor. v. 6. Gal. v. 9. 2dly, While you continue among them, you strengthen their hands, and harden them in their sin; in regard, tho' you reason against them, and dissent from them, yet by your practice you declare that the courses and measures that they are pursuing are not *tanti* as to make you leave communion with them, that they are not *tanti* as to fall under that command of the Lord by the apostle, 2 Thess. iii. 14. *And if any man obey not our word by this epistle, note that man, and have no company with him, that he may be ashamed.* Tho' blasphemy against the Son of God, with many other gross and dangerous errors, have been brought before the bar of the judicatories, and tho' no suitable testimony has been given against them, and tho' they are oppressing and breaking the heritage of God, and consequently in the exercise of government tyrannical; yet they may reasonably conclude, while you continue in communion with them, that you look upon these things to be of no such moment as to make you reckon them such disorderly walkers from whom you are called to withdraw, 2 Thess. iii. 6. *D. B.* Does not this practice natively tend to harden them in their sin? Has it no influence upon you, to make the just impressions that ye ought to have of the dishonour done to God, in the above and the like instances, by the present judicatories, more faint and languid upon your own spirits? Likewise, a generation of righteous persons thro' Scotland are thereby grieved, and the hands of some of your brethren, who are minting at a judicial testimony, are also weakned. If these things are duly weighed in the balance of the sanctuary, I fear, that, notwithstanding of your dissent in judicatories, ye shall be found art and part in the dishonours done to the Redeemer in his person and offices, by such a close communion and conjunction with the backsliding party.

2dly, When the judicatories of a church do, in their judicative capacity, carry on a course of defection from the Lord, and refuse to be reclaimed, it appears to me, from the unerring rule of the word, that these who desire to cleave to the Lord, tho' they are the smaller number, ought to discharge their duty by associating themselves together, in order to display the banner of a judicial testimony for truth. Before I
produce

produce Scripture precept and warrant for this, I must premise the following things: 1. When I speak of the duty of the minor part of the office-bearers of the church, to associate themselves together, as said is, it must be understood that they have access to meet together, and are not hindered by outward violence, or scattered by persecution, as is frequently the case of the church, Acts viii. 2. 2. I take it for granted, that the keys of government and discipline are given to all the ministers of the gospel by the exalted Head of the church, and that they belong to the pastoral office as well as the keys of doctrine: As also, that such as endeavour to be found faithful to the Lord, have a better claim to the keys, than such as are making use of them in direct opposition to the ends and purposes for which they were given to the office-bearers of the Lord's house. And I think it would be no difficult matter to prove, that such who are protecting the erroneous, and who refuse to condemn error, or to assert the truths in opposition to dangerous heresies vented and taught, and who are tyrannizing over the flock and heritage of God, have forfeit their claim to the exercise of the keys, till they return to their duty. And that this is the situation of the present judicatories of this national church, may appear from what is said in our judicial testimony, and from our testimony emitted 1734, and may be made more evident in due time. I hope you have such a view of the present state of matters, that you will acknowledge that the keys are perverted and abused; that a course of backsliding is carried on, and that they refuse to return unto the Lord. And, in this case, you and your brethren have the Lord's call to come out from among them, to associate together, and to hold up a judicial testimony for truth: As for instance, that command does oblige you to this, *Contend earnestly for the faith which was once delivered to the saints*, Jude 3. And the truths of God are a sacred *depositum* and trust delivered unto the church; when they are opposed and assaulted, the members of the church, and especially her office-bearers, who are particularly appointed and set for the defence of truth, ought to contend earnestly for the same. You know the import of the Greek word, that it is not an ordinary contending, but a contending with the utmost ardour and fervency, a contending with all our might: It is a stretching of ourselves to the uttermost in contending for the faith, that is, in upholding, maintaining and defending truth, in opposi-

sition to all attacks made upon it. You reckon that your dissents in judicatories are a contending for the faith. It is true, that in some cases they may be a suitable and proper testimony to truth: But, when the judicatories do, in their judicative capacity, carry on a course of defection and backsliding, and will not be reclaimed, we do not stretch out ourselves to the uttermost in the defence of truth, if we satisfy ourselves either with a doctrinal testimony, or with a dissent in judicatories. It is evident, that when the office bearers of the church, who desire to discharge their duty, have access to associate and meet together, do contend in a judicative capacity for truth, they carry a testimony somewhat further than by a simple dissent in judicatories. Tho', when we have done our utmost, we are far from doing that which is our duty; yet, if ye join not together to lift up a judicial testimony for oppressed and born-down truth, you do not contend earnestly; that is, you do not what is in the compass of your power to do; you do not what your pastoral office gives you a claim and title to do. If the present judicatories, in their judicative capacity, contend earnestly to dismiss the erroneous from their bar, and to oppress the heritage of God thro' the land, shall not we contend earnestly, or shall not we display the banner of a judicial testimony in the name of the Head and King of Zion, for wounded and falling truth in our streets, and for his oppressed and grieved subjects, who have been lifting up a cry thro'out all the corners of the land, for many years bypast, for help and relief, and who must needs groan under the yoke and burden without any remedy, notwithstanding of all your remonstrances and dissents in judicatories, unless you fall upon more effectual means for their relief? Likewise we are commanded, Phil. i. 27. to *stand fast in one spirit, with one mind, striving together for the faith of the gospel.*

The words *striving together* is most emphatic. The simple word signifies, To strive as in a battle or in a race. The compound word, used here, signifies a joint striving; like those who see the enemy advancing, they join together to oppose the enemy. This is the present state of matters in the judicatories of the church of Scotland: They are bearing down the truth in a judicative capacity; they are scattering the sheep of the Lord's pasture. Ought not such as are aggrieved under these church-ruining and renting courses, *strive together*? Should they not join and associate together for the defence of truth?

truth? Ye have a better claim to the exercise of the keys than they. The opposition that they make unto the Lord's truths and people, is an unlawful war; the power of drawing the spiritual sword is thereby devolved upon the better, tho' the smaller part. Ye ought therefore to associate together, and assert the truths, and do what lies within the compass of your power, in a judicative capacity, for the relief of the Lord's heritage and people; otherwise I do not see that you comply with the command of standing fast in one spirit, with one mind, striving together for the faith of the gospel. If this were sincerely aimed, with that courage and resolution that becomes them, by the Lord's sent ministers in Scotland, as it would be the most effectual check unto a corrupt party, so it would be a promising presage that our spiritual captivity should be returned, that our wilderness should become a fruitful field, and that glory should yet dwell in our land. I might inforce the present argument from many other places of scripture, such as, Gal. v. 1. Eph. iv. 14, 15, 16. Col. ii. 2. 2 John 8. Rev. ii. 25. But, if I should illustrate and confirm the argument from these and other places of scripture, I would swell this missive beyond all just bounds, and it is like to come out to a greater length than at first I intended.

I doubt not but you will alledge, that when you remonstrate in the present judicatories, by your reasonings, votes and protestations, against the sinful and unwarrantable steps that are taken; that you strive together for the faith of the gospel. But allow me to suggest unto you, 1st, That your striving in judicatories is not a striving together, it is not a standing fast in one spirit and in one mind, while there is not a joint testimony given against the present course of defection: You are like broken and scattered parties, who sometimes turn about and face the enemy, but the enemy possesses the field: They have taken the standard from you; they have set up their ensigns for signs, Psal. lxxiv. 4. 2^{dly}, Your dissents in judicatories are not a judicial testimony; they are indeed some testimony given in the court; but a judicial testimony for truth is an act of ecclesiastical power and authority, exercised by the office-bearers of the church when constitute in the name of the Lord Jesus, declaring and asserting the truths of Christ from his word, and vindicating the liberties where-with he hath made his people free, and condemning error, and censuring the erroneous. We have an illustrious pattern and example of this in the synodical meeting at Jerusalem,

Acts xv. where the rights and privileges of the members of the New-Testament church are asserted and vindicated, and sentence is pass against the Judaizing teachers, and they are condemned as such *who troubled the disciples with words, subverting their souls*, ver. 24. But, when you dissent in judicatories, ye acknowledge that the keys are perverted, and that church power and authority is abused; and tho' your dissents and other means that you use have no influence upon the judicatories to reclaim them, yet you will not make use of the keys for the ends and purposes for which they are committed unto you: And thus, notwithstanding of all your dissents, truth lies wounded and bleeding without a judicial testimony for it; the heritage of God are oppressed, and their rights and liberties are never judicially asserted and vindicated. And if thus your method and practice is followed, Christ shall not have an ecclesiastical court in Scotland to do justice to his injured truths and oppressed members (in a judicial way) in this day of grievous sinning and backsliding.

3dly, It deserves our serious consideration, that the *vinculum*, or bond of our union and conjunction with the present judicatories of this national church, is broke; hence our union with them is dissolved, therefore we ought to come out from among them, and to testify in a way of secession from them against the present course of defection.

To illustrate and confirm the above argument and reason for bearing testimony in a way of secession from the present judicatories of this national church, we must enquire what is the bond of our union and conjunction in the said judicatories; and then it must be made appear that this *vinculum* or bond is broken, and that our union is thereby dissolved. And, for clearing the first of these, I offer the following things.

1st, When we speak of the bond of our union and conjunction in the judicatories, I hope it will not be alledged, that the civil establishment granted unto any church is the *vinculum*, or bond of the union and conjunction of the office-bearers of the church in ecclesiastical judicatories, or of such members amongst themselves. We will readily agree, that the countenance of civil authority is not necessary to the being of the church, tho' it is very profitable and useful to her outward peaceable being: As also, that the countenance and protection of the civil magistrate, given unto the judicatories of the church, in the faithful discharge of their duty, is a great outward

outward blessing, promised unto her in New Testament times, Isa. xlix. 23. and lx. 5, 10. Rev. xvii. 16. But when a course of backsliding from the Lord is carried on under the shadow of the civil establishment, or when a legal establishment is reckoned the bond of union and conjunction in judicatories, then, and in both these cases, it becomes a snare to the church, and is neither promised nor given by the Lord Jesus unto her for any such ends and purposes.

2dly, The primary ligament and bond of our union and conjunction in all church judicatories is the word of God, or the profession, acknowledgement, and belief of the truth, as it is contained in the holy scriptures of the Old and New Testament, the only infallible and unerring rule of faith and practice, Isa. viii. 20. Gal. vi. 16. 2 Pet. i. 19. And the secondary ligament, or bond of any such union and conjunction, are the subordinate standards of doctrine, worship, government and discipline, which have been received and adopted by a church, as agreeable to, and founded on, the holy scriptures.

3dly, The bond of our union and conjunction in the judicatories of this national church, immediately after the Lord brought us out of Antichristian darkness, was our Confession of Faith, received and approved *anno* 1650, together with the first and second books of discipline. The doctrine contained in the said Confession of Faith, and the government and discipline of the house of God, as it is held forth from the word of God in the books of discipline, was frequently sworn to in the national covenant, which was renewed with great solemnity in the year 1638. Afterward the Confession of Faith, compiled at Westminster, together with the form of church government, and directory for worship, agreed upon by the said assembly, were all received by the general assemblies of this church, in the manner expressed in the several acts, adopting the same as principal parts of that conjunction and uniformity in religion, sworn unto in the solemn league and covenant of the three nations. Hence the *vinculum*, or bond of our union and conjunction in all our church-judicatories, is the doctrine, worship, discipline and government of the Lord's house, held forth from the holy scriptures in our Confession of Faith, books of discipline, form of presbyterial church-government, and directory for worship; and all ranks of persons in this land are solemnly bound and obliged to a-

hide in the faith, profession and obedience of the said doctrine, worship, government and discipline, by the national covenant of Scotland, and by the Solemn League and Covenant of the three nations. But it is much to be regreted, that the bond of our union and conjunction in the judicatories of this national church is broke, as will evidently appear, if the following things are duly considered.

1st, Tho' all ranks of persons have been guilty of the violation of our solemn oaths and covenants, and tho' they have been condemned by several parliamentary acts and deeds, and treated in a most ignominious manner; yet the judicatories of this church have never expressly asserted their perpetual and inviolable obligation, since our wonderful deliverance from tyranny and slavery in the memorable year 1688. If the obligation of our covenants had been recognized, or if the covenants national and solemn league had been appointed to be signed by the office-bearers of this church, with accommodation to our circumstances; or if one had been made up of both, with additions and explications suited to our present case, and with a solemn acknowledgement of the public breaches and engagement to the duties of the covenants; we had been nearer our reforming bond of union and conjunction in judicatories, than by the *formula* 1711, not to mention that general and loose *formula*, agreed upon by the assembly 1694, which (and no other) elders are required to sign to this very day. And here I may justly observe, that, as these *formulae* are substitute in the room of our solemn national covenants, we have in so far deviate from our reforming bond of union and conjunction in judicatories.

2^{dly}, If it is alledged, That in the *formula* 1711 we have the substance of our national oath and covenant, in regard that, by our signing the said *formula* we engage and promise, "That we shall firmly and closely adhere to the doctrine contained in our Confession of Faith, and to the purity of worship practised in this church, as also to our Presbyterial government and discipline; and likewise that we shall, to the utmost of our power in our station, assert, maintain and defend the said doctrine, worship, discipline and government of this church by kirk-sessions, presbyteries, provincial synods, and general assemblies; and that, in our practice, we shall conform ourselves to the said worship, and submit to the said discipline and government, and ne-

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“ver endeavour, directly nor indirectly, the prejudice or sub-
 “version of the same;” I shall not enter upon the question,
 Whether the *formula* contains the substance of our national
 oath and covenant? but I must observe, that, even when the
formula 1711 is stated as the bond of our union in the present
 judicatories of this national church, the said judicatories have
 burst asunder this bond of our conjunction with them, and
 consequently our union with them is dissolved, as will appear
 from the following instances. 1st, Arminian errors, and A-
 rian blasphemies, were brought before the judicatories in the
 several processes against Mr. Simson, beside the pernicious
 and dangerous errors that have been vented by Mr. Campbell;
 but the present judicatories are so far from asserting, main-
 taining and defending in their station the doctrine contained
 in our Confession of Faith, that they have never expressly con-
 demned the scheme of errors vented by the foresaid persons;
 they have never declared the errors vented by them to be con-
 trary to the word of God, and our Confession of Faith, nor
 asserted the truth in express terms, and in opposition to the
 said errors, tho’ the scheme of divine truth contained in our
 Confession of Faith, is unhinged by them; and therefore the
 judicatories of this national church are justly chargeable with
 letting slip the truths that we have heard and received, Heb.
 ii. 1. You know, that Messrs. Simson and Campbell have pled,
 That their doctrines were agreeable to our Confession of
 Faith; but as men wrest the scriptures to their own destruc-
 tion, so Confessions of Faith may likewise be abused and per-
 verted: Therefore this should have roused the judicatories of
 this church to assert and vindicate the truths held forth from
 the word of God in our Confession, in opposition to the dar-
 ing and bold insults that were made upon divine truth, con-
 tained in our Confession of Faith, by men full of subtilty, and
 enemies to the truths of God. But since error has been main-
 tained and defended at the bar of our assemblies, and truth
 left naked without a judicial testimony unto it, and since the
 edge of divine truth has not been directed against the new and
 different shapes under which the old Arian and Arminian er-
 rors have appeared, which is one of the special uses and de-
 signs of all Confessions of Faith, the judicatories of this na-
 tional church are chargeable with departing from our stan-
 dards of doctrine, and are criminally guilty of counteracting
 that solemn promise and engagement contained in the above-
 mentioned

mentioned *formula*, whereby they are bound and obliged to assert, maintain and defend, to the utmost of their power in their station, the doctrine contained in our excellent Confession of Faith.

Likewise, our Presbyterian church-government and discipline is subverted by the proceedings of judicatories for many years by past, particularly in the manifold acts of violence and oppression upon the Lord's heritage thro' the land, by the intrusion of ministers upon them, and by assuming a privative authority and jurisdiction over presbyteries, in devolving their inherent power and authority upon pack'd committees; as also, by the acts past by the assembly *anno* 1733, with respect to the protesting ministers, and the ministers in the presbytery of Dunfermline, whereby new and unwarrantable terms of ministerial and Christian communion are imposed. By these, and the like tyrannical and arbitrary state, our Presbyterian frame and constitution is unhing'd, and the judicatories of the church have involved themselves in the guilt of counteracting the above promise contained in the *formula*, whereby they engage, That they shall never endeavour, directly nor indirectly, the prejudice or subversion of our government and discipline. Thus, in all the above weighty and important instances, the *vinculum* and bond of our conjunction, as it is stated in the *formula* 1711, is broke; and consequently our union with the present judicatories is dissolved: Our union and conjunction with them cannot now be that unity of the spirit in the bond of peace, Eph. iv. 31. It must be a conjunction at best for a series of protestations against, and dissents from, them, *i. e.* a conjunction for war, and not for peace,

But I am afraid that I exceed the bounds of a missive, and therefore I shall not insist further in the proof that it is our duty to maintain a testimony against the current of defection, in the way of secession from the judicatories, tho' many other things might be offered from their present situation and conduct. I shall now proceed to take a view of the scripture-instances that you adduce, which lead you to think that communion may be held with churches very corrupt, and especially with such as have given no testimony at all against gross heretics and heresies taught by them. What you intend to prove by these instances is, (as I humbly judge) that notwithstanding the present judicatories of this national church are in many instances very corrupt, and tho' they have given no

suitable

suitable testimony against gross heresies that have been taught, nor duly censured the erroneous, yet you may continue in communion with them, and that it is not your duty to testify against their corruptions in the way of secession from them. I shall endeavour, with all the sincerity and impartiality I can to weigh your particular scripture-instances, and to consider what is the duty pointed out from them in the present circumstance of this national church.

The first instance that you give is that of Joseph of Arimathea. Ye might have added Nicodemus too, Luke xxiii. 50. John xix. 38, 39. They were both members of the Jewish Sanhedrim, and dissented from their atrocious deed in condemning the Prince of life. But I cannot see from this instance that we may warrantably continue in communion with judicatories very corrupt. There is one thing must be proven before ye can make good your argument from this example, *viz.* That Joseph and Nicodemus continued to keep their seat in the Jewish Sanhedrim after that wicked deed of condemning the Lord of glory. But this cannot be proven from scripture; yea, the contrary appears evident to me: For we find the Sanhedrim convened a short time thereafter, Acts iv. and they commanded the apostles, ver. 18. *not to speak at all, nor teach in the name of Jesus.* You cannot suppose that Joseph and Nicodemus were present, otherwise you must likewise suppose that they consented to this wicked command of the Sanhedrim, or, which is the same thing, that they were criminally silent: And I do not find, in any of the after-meetings of the Sanhedrim recorded in the book of the Acts, the least hint that they were present. Hence I think it obvious and plain, that Joseph and Nicodemus, after they had solemnly dissented from the above wicked deed of the Sanhedrim, left that corrupt court, and joined themselves to the society of the apostles and disciples of Christ who were testifying against the corruptions of the Jewish church and state: And therefore I may justly infer from this instance you have given me, that you should leave the judicatories of this national church, where Christ is wounded in his truths and oppressed in his members, with a solemn protestation against them; and that ye should join no more with them while they continue in the present course of backsliding and defection, but rather that ye should join yourself to such as are endeavouring to testify against present and former corruptions.

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Your second scripture-argument against secession is taken from our Lord's epistles to the churches of Asia; and particularly to the churches of Pergamos and Thyatira, who had given no testimony at all against gross hereties, and heresies taught by them: But yet, say you, there is no call to separate from them, tho' the Lord is displeased with their not censuring these heretics; and they are approved by him in other respects, as holding fast his name, and that they had not denied the faith, tho' they had not censured these who had done so.

I cannot find any argument from the epistles to these churches, to support your conduct and practice in continuing in communion with the judicatories of this national church: And that because,

1st, There is a great and evident disparity betwixt the case of the churches in Asia, and the present judicatories of the church of Scotland: For, in the first place, the churches you mention are not charged with carrying on a course of defection in their judicative capacity; they are not charged with using a tyrannical and lordly dominion over the heritage and flock of God; they are not charged with any direct countenance and support given to the erroneous and seducers, nor with any positive step of defection from reformation once attained unto. But this is not the state of matters at present in the judicatories of this church, as may appear from what is above observed: And therefore we have no just claim to the commendation given to Pergamos, Rev. ii. 13. of *holding fast his name*; and much less to that which is given to Thyatira, ver. 19. *That her last works were more than her first*: for ours are daily farther from our first works 2^{dly}, The churches of Pergamos and Thyatira are indeed charged with a very hainous and grievous omission, viz. That there was no ecclesiastical process against the seducers mentioned, and that church-censures were not inflicted upon them: But then you will grant, that the sin of the office bearers of these churches had been more hainous if a process had been commenced against them, and if they or their errors had been brought to the bar of the several judicatories of Pergamos and Thyatira, and if the seducers had been dismissed without censure, and their errors without an expresse judicial testimony against them. Now, there is not the least hint that the office-bearers of Pergamos and Thyatira had taken any notice of them in a judicial way; yea, the contrary is plainly declared in the several epistles

epistles unto them: But this is the hainous crime of the judicatories of the church of Scotland, that the erroneous have been brought to their bar, gross and pernicious errors have been under their cognizance, and yet the erroneous are still retained in ministerial and Christian communion, and their errors are never judicially condemned. Thus you see that there is no parallel betwixt the case of the churches you mention and that of the church of Scotland: Nay, the office-bearers of the church of Scotland, in their judicative capacity, may be justly charged with a more direct and more express countenancing and supporting of error, than any of the above-mentioned churches of Asia.

But, not to insist upon this, let us consider what is the duty pointed out unto us from what the Spirit hath said unto these churches: And here we may observe, in the first place, what were the sins of Pergamos and Thyatira for which they are reprov'd and condemned. We have the sin of Pergamos, Rev. ii. 14, 15. *But I have a few things against thee, because thou hast there them that hold the doctrine of Balaam, &c. So hast thou also them that hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitans; which things I hate.* And in ver. 20. Thyatira's sin. *Notwithstanding I have a few things against thee, because thou sufferest that woman Jezebel, which calleth herself a prophetess, to teach and seduce my servants, &c.* It is evident that both these churches are reprov'd and condemned, because the sword of discipline was not drawn against the heretics and seducers mentioned, and because they were tolerate or kept in communion with them notwithstanding of their gross and abominable doctrines. Hence the duty pointed out unto the churches in Asia, and unto the churches in all succeeding generations, is to purge out from among them the erroneous seducers, by inflicting church-censures upon them, and condemning their errors: And consequently the judicatories of the church of Scotland are highly guilty in holding such in ministerial and Christian communion with them who have taught Arian or Arminian doctrines, and in suffering such to teach who have exalted self unto the throne of God, and who propagate other pernicious and soul-ruining errors.

2dly, Tho' we are not told from the scriptures what was the conduct and behaviour of these churches in Asia after this solemn reproof was given them, nor how they entertained the same; yet it cannot be refused that it was their duty immediately to have set about purging the churches of these corrupt

corrupt seducers: As also, their sin was more highly aggravated if they despised or neglected the reproofs given them from heaven in the several epistles directed unto them. And we may easily suppose that the churches of Pergamos and Thyatira did one of the two; either they did take with the reproof that was given them and discharged their duty, or they did it not: If they did take with the reproof, and set about the discharge of their duty, that is, if they judicially condemned these abominable heresies, and censured the wicked seducers, then there was no ground of secession from them. In like manner, if the judicatories of this national church had discharged their duty after representations and remonstrances given unto them, there would have been no ground of secession from them; or, if they would yet return to their duty, and display the banner of a faithful testimony for truth, and purge the house of God of heretics and intruders, then the grounds of our secession would be removed, and we might have the comfortable prospect of a pleasant and beautiful unity and harmony in carrying on the work of the Lord.

But let us suppose, that the office-bearers of the churches above-mentioned did not discharge their duty, and that the majority of them at least continued in their former indolence and negligence, notwithstanding of the reproof and charge given unto them from heaven; the question will be, What was the duty pointed out in these epistles unto the minor part, who are supposed to be aggrieved under the negligence of the major part, and willing to do their duty? What you write imports, that you do not see they had a call to separate from the majority: But, that we may understand what is the duty of the smaller part in this supposed case, let us take a view of the particular and special duties that all the office-bearers of the churches are directed unto, after the above solemn reproofs are given unto them. And, *1st*, The angel of the church of Pergamos, or the office-bearers in that church are exhorted to repent: And this exhortation is enforced with two weighty arguments and motives; the one is, *Or else I will come unto thee quickly*; that is, I will suddenly come in a way of judgment against thee: The other motive follows, *And will fight against them* (to wit, the Nicolaitans) *with the sword of my mouth*; that is, I will take the work in mine own hand. As if it had been said unto this angel, If thou spare these wicked men, and do not thy duty with reference to them, I myself

will

will come in another way, and lay thee by, and follow my purpose in sentencing and censuring of them, by some other mean. *Durb. in Loc.* As for the duty this angel is exhorted unto, *repent*; it certainly includes two things, 1. A call to be humbled before the Lord for his negligence in the exercise of church discipline. 2. A command to return to his duty, and the faithful discharge of the same, in purging out, by ecclesiastical process and censure, the Nicolaitans from among them. All the office-bearers of the church are charged to repent: When the command is given to every one to repent, can we suppose, that if the majority continued still in the neglect of their duty, that the lesser part, who were sensible both of their sin and duty, should by the sloth and negligence of the greater part be excused from the discharge of their duty? Or, which is the same thing, if the greater part refused to repent, ought not the lesser part therefore to repent? Nay, the command to repent, with the awful certification annexed, ought to have roused up all or any, tho' the smallest number of the office-bearers of that church, to have displayed the banner of a judicial testimony against the abominable Nicolaitans, that they might have delivered at least their own souls from the judgment threatened. And as the command to repent was a plain warrant even for the lesser part to make use of the keys of government and discipline for maintaining and supporting truth; so, if they had made use of the keys accordingly, they had discharged their duty, give it the name of Separation, Secession, or what other name you please.

As for the duty required of the office-bearers of the church of Thyatira, it is expressed in the following manner, ver. 24, 25. *But unto you I say, and unto the rest in Thyatira, As many as have not this doctrine, and who have not known the depths of Satan, as they speak, I will put upon you none other burden, but that which ye have already, hold fast till I come.* From the first of these verses it is evident, that severals in the church of Thyatira were carried away with Jezebel's corrupt doctrines, several members of that church, who are called the Lord's servants, ver. 20. were seduced: It is also plain, that a part of that church were kept pure and clean from Jezebel's pernicious doctrines. The duty enjoined them is called a *burden*, not as if any duty were burdensome in itself, but in regard of the obligation that they are laid peremptorily under to discharge it, and because of the difficulties and trials that might

might attend the discharge of the same; and the burden itself, and none other, which is laid upon them, is express in the 25th verse, *But that which ye have already, hold fast*; that is, Hold fast the purity which ye have attained unto, or the good work that the Lord had wrought for you and amongst you. The command to hold fast, implies they were in danger of losing their former purity by the doctrines of Jezebel, and by their own slackness and negligence in the exercise of church-discipline against these seducing teachers; and therefore the command to hold fast, not only points out the duty of every one to keep himself pure from these gross corruptions that were in this church, but it is a charge given in a special manner to her office-bearers to hold fast in a judicial way the purity that they had attained unto, by censuring Jezebel, or those that were seduced by her. If this is not the meaning, then the remedy prescribed, or the duty enjoined, is not at all proportioned nor suited unto the weighty reproof that is given the office bearers of this church for suffering Jezebel to teach and seduce the Lord's servants, as in the 20th ver. Further, when they are commanded to hold fast, it is evident that it is the purer part of this church, whoever they were, whether the smaller or the greater part, who are commanded and charged to lift up the standard of a judicial testimony against the corruptions that had crept in amongst them, by censuring the seducers, and condemning their corrupt doctrines: And there is just ground to apprehend that even the purer part in these churches did neglect this duty, and that a faithful judicial testimony was not kept by them; whereby they gradually corrupted themselves more and more, till at length they were utterly rejected, and their house is long ago left desolate. Upon the whole, it appears evident to me from what the Spirit says unto the churches in Asia, that when the majority of the office-bearers in a church, after calls and warnings given them, refuse to condemn error, and to bear testimony to the truths of God, or to purge out the erroneous from amongst them, that then, and in this case, the smaller part, even tho' few in number, that desire to approve themselves unto the Lord, have his command, call and warrant to associate together, and to exercise the keys of government and discipline, for asserting the truth, for condemning error and censuring the erroneous, and for doing what in them lies for the help and relief of the heritage of God when they are oppress'd

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press'd and ruled with rigour by corrupt judicatories: And when they associate together for these ends and purposes, they are not guilty of making a schism and rent in the church, or of separation and secession from the church; they only leave the corrupt party, and are endeavouring to discharge their duty; they are holding that fast which they have attained unto; they are doing what all the office-bearers of the church ought to do by virtue of the authority and command of the great Head of the church unto them every one, and what their several offices do oblige them unto.

A third instance you give is that of the churches planted by the apostles, "Especially Galatia and Corinth, who were greatly degenerate, and in Corinth were such as denied the resurrection, whereby the whole Christian doctrine was ruined; yet no separation from them is enjoined, nor is there any account that they had censured them."

What I have observed above, with respect to the churches of Asia, may be very well applied to the churches of Corinth and Galatia. I shall only further notice in a few words, That the apostle, 1 Cor. vi. 6, 7. commands the office-bearers in Corinth, *to purge out the old leaven*, for this reason, *Know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump?* Likewise the churches of Galatia, where corrupt doctrines were disseminate, are commanded to stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made them free, Gal. v. 1. and for the very same reason in the 9th verse, *A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump*. If the office-bearers of the church of Corinth and Galatia were charged to purge out the scandalous and erroneous from among them, and that because *a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump*, then it is plain, that, if the bulk and body refuse to do their duty, the lesser part, who desire to approve themselves unto the Lord, were, upon the same very reason and ground, authorised and warranted to exercise the key of discipline for purging the house of God; and, if they neglected to do their duty, it is plainly declared, that they should be held and reputed as a part of the corrupt and leavened mass and lump. I might also argue from the apostle's command and weighty reasonings, 2 Cor. vi. 15, 16, 17. For, tho' communion with idolaters in their idolatrous worship seems to be mainly intended in the place, yet the apostle's reasonings for separation from such communion may be extended with the same force and weight unto withdrawing from communion

nion with corrupt and degenerate churches, and especially from communion with such, where errors are maintained that overthrow the whole Christian doctrine.

I shall only further observe, That your argument, as you have laid it from the church of Corinth, proves too much, and what none of our reformed divines, since our secession from Rome, have, so far as I know, asserted, viz. That we may warrantably hold communion with churches so very corrupt, and where such damnable heresies are vented, whereby the whole Christian doctrine is ruined and overthrown.

I have now endeavoured to consider the weight of all your scripture-arguments for justifying your sentiments and practice in continuing in ministerial communion with the present judicatories of this national church; and, after all, I must own, that I am more confirmed from the enquiry that I have been essaying to make into the above scripture-passages which you have adduced, that such is the state and situation of the present judicatories of this national church, that all who would desire to be found faithful unto the Lord, ought to leave them, and to associate themselves together, for holding up and maintaining a testimony in a judicative capacity against the present course of backsliding and defection; and this is what I undertook to prove, as I stated the question in the entry.

There are some other things contained in your letter, upon which I beg leave to suggest a word or two, with as much brevity as I can.

You say, *That you hope the presbytery of whom you are a member, of whom none have read the late act of parliament, will not decline a judicial testimony.*

I desire to bless the Lord, that all the members of your presbytery have been preserved from that snare; and if they shall agree upon a free and faithful judicial testimony to injured truth, and against present and former defections of this church and land, I am sure it would be matter of joy to many that fear the Lord, and a promising token for good, under the many cloudy and breaking providences of our day, Psal. lx. 1, — 5. But then, if your presbytery shall agree upon such a testimony, and if it is not adopted by the superior judicatories, I do not see how you can continue in conjunction with them: If the said judicatories shall either condemn or neglect your testimony, it is the same thing; you continuing in either of these cases in conjunction with them, would be a material giving up with the same. Besides, as none of you have read the

the late act of parliament, how can you continue in conjunction with such judicatories, where the most part of the constituent members have, in some shape or other, read the said act? And you will grant that the reading of it is at least a practical giving up with the sole headship and sovereignty of Christ over his house, and consequently they have changed their holding, and taken their holding in the exercise of their ministerial office from the civil powers. And tho' the greatest part of your synod have not read the act, yet they are involved in that guilt if they do not censure the readers, and emit a faithful testimony against the dishonour done to the Head of the church by the imposing and reading of the same; and, if the next general assembly shall do nothing this way, it is become the sin of this national church, and a new ground of secession from them.

You further add, That you are of the same mind with the blest Mr. Boston, upon the head of church-communion, expressed in his book, entitled, *The Crook in the Lot*, or rather, *The Sovereignty and Wisdom of God displayed in the Afflictions of Men*, &c. You have not directed me to the particular place you point at; but I judge you have in your eye what is said page 171. in his discourse on 1 Cor. x. 17. where he observes; *That saints must separate from all false worship, that is, worship which is not instituted by God himself wholly, but is mixt with human inventions and ordinances*, Rev. xviii. 4. He adds, *Where the worship is pure, but some sinful thing is imposed upon you as a term of communion with the worshippers, you must refuse communion with them on these terms*, Rom. iii. 8. *In these cases separation is not only lawful, but a necessary duty: And, if I could perceive either of these in our case in the communion of this church, I should not only think it my duty to separate, but also to press you to it. But, tho' our mother has gone far back, she has not gone that length yet.*

I very much regard the judgment of that worthy and great man; but yet I cannot but notice, that our reverend brethren, the publishers of that book, in their preface acquaint us, that the revising of it was amongst his last works; and they leave it to exercise the reader's attention, how far he himself revised, and where we have only his notes (say they) as he preach'd them. I humbly judge, with all submission unto them, that they ought to have told us plainly, how far it was revised by himself: Tho' we have several excellent things in that discourse on the foresaid text, yet when I ob-

served, in reading, that there is not such a distinct and plain connection in some of the heads of the said discourse, and that some things are not guarded in the manner that is usual with that great and good man in his other writings, I was led to think that it was never revised by himself. And, as to the above-mentioned passage, one may conclude from it, that one may lawfully and warrantably receive ordinances dispensed by intruders, or such who have not the Lord's call and mission to labour amongst them, and that because the worship is pure, and because nothing sinful is required and imposed as a term of communion with the worshippers: And accordingly this very argument is made use of to persuade people, that it is their duty to receive ordinances dispensed by such as are violently thrust upon them in the several corners of the land; yea, this very argument was made use of to persuade people to submit to the ministry of Prelatic incumbents in the late times of Prelacy. But I am persuaded this was far from being the sentiment of that great and good man, and that he would never condemn people for their withdrawing from ordinances dispensed by such as are intruded upon them, even tho' the worship should be pure, and tho' no sinful term of communion should be required of the worshippers.

But, since I have not stated the question and argument in this missive concerning communion in worship, but only concerning union and conjunction in the present judicatories of the church, therefore the above passage of Mr. Boston's discourse has no concern in the present argument: Yet, in regard it is frequently said that we may and ought to join in communion with a church where no sinful terms of communion are imposed, and that secession from the present judicatories is unlawful and unwarrantable, in regard that no sinful terms of communion are imposed (and, if I do not mistake you, this is what you intend by mentioning Mr. Boston on the head of church-communion) I shall only suggest a few things on this subject.

1st, I do not see that it holds universally true, that we ought not to make a secession from a church where no sinful terms of communion are imposed upon the worshippers. I may suppose the bulk of a church should declare themselves Arian (as has been sometimes the dismal state of matters in the Christian church) yet in the mean time they should not pose it upon you as a term of communion with them to embrace the Arian scheme; I doubt if you would think it safe for

for you to join either in ministerial or Christian communion with them. But let me give you an instance nearer our doors: A considerable body of the dissenters in Ireland have rejected Confessions of Faith, they will not allow them to be tests of orthodoxy; and they think it sufficient in order to church-communion, that men profess and acknowledge their belief of the holy scriptures, the only unerring rule of faith and life, or that they declare their belief of the truth in express scripture-terms: Surely this is nowise a sinful term of communion; yet our worthy brethren in Ireland, who are sensible that Confessions of Faith have been an eye-sore to the adversaries of truth in all ages of the church, and who esteem them as proper and suitable means of acknowledging and confessing the truth when opposed and subverted by the sleight of men, and their cunning craftiness whereby they ly in wait to deceive, have judged it their duty to make a secession from these who have discarded Confessions, and to associate together in separate synods and presbyteries from them; and I humbly conceive their conduct and practice may be very well justified. Therefore, if such expressions as these, That it is unlawful and unwarrantable to declare a secession from a church where sinful terms of communion are not required of the worshippers, or that we are to join in communion where no sinful terms of communion are imposed, shall be taken in their full meaning and extent, they may be improved to support the latitudinarian scheme, which is so much the idol and darling of too many in the present age.

2dly, You know, that, in the several papers emitted by the seceding brethren, they have made it appear, that by the acts of assembly past *anno* 1733, both against the protesting ministers, and against the ministers of your presbytery, new and unwarrantable terms of ministerial and Christian communion are imposed upon the ministers and members of this church; and tho' it may be alledged that these acts are not put in execution, yet they are standing and binding acts and constitutions; and, seeing they are not repealed, they must be reckoned terms of union and communion with this national church: And, if the worthy minister you mention had lived a little longer, he would have had occasion to see, and ground to lament, some further steps and lengths of degeneracy and backsliding in the present judicatories, which he was not a witness unto in his own time.

I have now considered every thing contained in your missive;

I am afraid I have wearied you with too much writing on the subject: If any thing has drop'd from my pen to the prejudice of that cause and testimony which my brethren and I judge our duty to espouse and hold, it is only to be imputed to myself. I am not, in writing this, in concert with any of my brethren, and none of them have seen it before I have sent it unto you. If there is any weight in what I have writ, I hope you will examine it without partiality or prejudice; and that you will seriously consider, whether or not you are called to join with that small handful of your brethren, who are, by a remarkable series and train of divine providences, led forth without the camp, and who, tho' they are despised and reproached, yet I hope, in this cause, they bear his reproach, Heb. xiii. 13. I know it is alledged, That they might be more useful in the judicatories, than by continuing in their present situation; but, from what is offered above, I hope it will appear that it is their duty to continue to bear testimony against present and former backslidings and defections, in the way of secession from the judicatories of this national church: And tho' it is but little that they have done, or can do, yet they have been endeavouring, thro' the Lord's assistance, to lift up a judicial testimony for truth; and this I take to be a considerable step, however it may be run down and despised by many, both ministers and professors. They are also essaying to use the proper means for the relief of the Lord's oppressed heritage thro' the land, and I do not see that you can do any of these in your present situation. And if your seceding brethren cannot do more, or if the Lord's work in their hands is despised on account of the paucity of their number, on whom shall the blame be laid? Even upon you, and others of their brethren, that will not put to their shoulders to bear a part of the burden with them. May not the following words be justly applied to the present case, Judg. v. 16. *Why abodest thou among the sheepfolds, to hear the bleating of the flocks? For the divisions of Reuben there were great searchings of heart.* But tho' our divisions and breaches be lamentable, yet that promise may be comforting and refreshing, Isa. lii. 8. *Thy watchmen shall lift up the voice, with the voice together shall they sing; for they shall see eye to eye, when the Lord shall bring again Zion.* May the Lord hasten it in his own time. I am,

R. D. B.

Perth, April 8.
1738.

Your's most affectionately,
WILLIAM WILSON.
POSTSCRIPT.



POSTSCRIPT.

THIS letter was written without the least intention of publishing it; but two neighbouring brethren, having seen a copy thereof after the principal was sent off, were of opinion, that, if it were made public, it might be of use to give some light into the state of the question betwixt the seceding brethren and the judicatories; the case being still mistaken by many, and industriously misrepresented by others. When this motion was made, the reverend brother to whom the letter was sent was acquainted therewith, and he was pleased to give way to the publishing of it; but at the same time he did plainly insinuate, That it had not given him satisfaction with reference to the conduct of the seceding brethren.

Tho' the publishing of this missive was urged upon the above and other considerations, yet all thoughts of this kind were quite laid aside till some days ago, when An Essay on Separation by the reverend Mr. Currie minister at Kinglassie came to my hands; wherein I found the state of the question so much perplexed and involved, and the conduct of the seceding brethren so grossly misrepresented, and the grievous charge of schism and separation, of renting, dividing, breaking and ruining the church, so unjustly laid against them; that I thought it was necessary that something should be done in the mean time, in order to a fair and clear stating of the case betwixt the said brethren and the present judicatories of this national church, till they shall have time and opportunity jointly to consider upon the proper means for vindicating their conduct from the unjust aspersions that are thrown upon the same: And I humbly judge that they will be under no difficulty to vindicate the cause and testimony they maintain, notwithstanding of what is alledged to the prejudice of the same in this voluminous Essay. If they are of a critical temper, they may find abundance of matter for exercising such a talent in every page almost of this large performance: Or, if they shall choose, instead of argument and reasoning, to deal in citations from great and learned men, and at the same time do not consider against whom their argument is laid by

these famous authors, and how it is applied by them, they may amuse and bemist their readers, and leave them as much in the dark about the true state of the question, when they have done with reading their bulky performance, as when they began.

I do not pretend to attempt a direct reply to a book wherein so many reverend brethren are concerned; but I hope I shall be excused it: make a few remarks upon it, till they have time and leisure to consider what notice it deserves: And, in the mean time, wherein I fail or mistake in stating the case, it is to be imputed to myself alone, and not to any other of my seceding brethren.

The reverend Mr. Currie represents the brethren as Separatists from the church (from the true church of Christ, &c.) Chap. 1. and thro'out his book: Yet he cannot but know that they have always refused that their secession is stated from the true church of Christ, or from the church of Scotland. 1st Testimony, p. 45. they own, that they have declared a secession from the present judicatories of this national church, "In regard they are breaking down our beautiful
" Presbyterian constitution, and pursuing such measures as
" actually corrupt, or have the most direct tendency to corrupt, the doctrine contained in our excellent Confession of
" Faith, and imposing new terms of ministerial and Christian
" communion." Thus their secession is stated in the forelaid Testimony, p. 45, 46. and they have endeavoured to prove the above charge against the present judicatories; but Mr. C—e has never once entred into the argument as it is laid in the said testimony, altho' he frequently alleges that the brethren have in their act and testimony determined some disputable points, and also that they are guilty of some palpable mistakes (which allegations may be considered in due time) yet they may challenge him to point out any principle adopted by them in the papers they have emitted, and particularly in their presbyterial act and testimony, that is not agreeable to the word of God, and our other subordinate standards of doctrine, worship, government and discipline: Nay, they have endeavoured particularly and expressly to testify against the gross doctrinal errors that have been vented, and the sinful perverting and abusing of the keys of government and discipline that take place in this day of degeneracy and defection. Must they therefore be reckoned Separatists from the true church of Christ? He tells us, p. 9. " That Rutherford, when speak-
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“ing of the Popish ceremonies of the church of Old England, “ says, We teach separation from these ceremonies to be lawful, but not from the churches.” The application of his words to the present case is very obvious. The question then is, If a departure from communion with the present judicatories of this national church, because for several years by past they have been carrying on a course of defection from our received and covenanted principles, and refuse to be reclaimed, is a separation from the church of Scotland, or from the true church of Christ? But it is necessary in order unto a further clearing of the question that I consider more particularly what is advanced by Mr. C—e in his 1 chap. where, p. 2. at the head, he says, “ I humbly think it cannot be denied the church of Scotland is yet a true church of Christ; “ for all the marks of a true church are still to be found in her.”

If I were to indulge a critical humour, I might observe, that, according to Mr. C—e, a church may be a true church of Christ, and yet want the marks of a true church of Christ: For, chap. 4. he mentions six grounds of separation from a church. His grounds of secession are, damnable heresies maintained in her standards, idolatry in worship, cruel and intolerable tyranny in government, &c. And he begins his fifth chapter thus, “ Separation from a true church, except “ in the above and like cases, was always reckoned a hainous “ sin by the judicious and tender, &c.” If his words have any sense and meaning, they bear, That a church may be a true church, and yet the above and like things may be found in her; and consequently she may want all the marks of a true church which he had given. The reverend Mr. C—e thinks fit to manage the argument, for the most part thro’ his performance, with criticisms of this kind; and with far less shadow of reason he treats after this way, not only the presbytery’s act and testimony, but even acts of reforming assemblies: But I hope the seceding brethren shall never trifle after this manner in handling such a grave and important subject.

I agree with Mr. C—e in the marks that he gives of a true church, from the 16th article of our first Confession of Faith, as they are laid in the said Confession; tho’ I may differ widely from him in the application of them. And here I shall take them particularly under consideration, and enquire if they can be justly applied unto the church as represented in her present judicatories: For the question, as I have once and again observed in the missive, is concerning the warrantableness of secession

cession from the present judicatories of this national church.

The first note or mark whereby the true church of God is known and discerned from the filthy synagogues, according to the foresaid Confession, is, "The true preaching of the word of God, wherein God hath revealed himself unto us, as the writings of the prophets and apostles do declare." I might here observe, that the preaching of the word may be considered as it is an instituted mean for gathering and constituting a visible church. The word may be purely preached amongst a company of Pagans and Infidels for their conversion: But this does not prove them to be a church, far less a true church of Christ. Mr. Currie may see more to this purpose in Rutherford's *Peaceable Plea*, Chap. 9. But when the true preaching of the word is considered as a note or mark of a true visible church, unto which we may safely join, then it includes, according to the citation given us from Mr. Gillespie (by Mr. C——e, p. 3d) a maintaining and professing the true doctrine and the true faith; which, says Mr. Gillespie, "is by all Protestant orthodox writers made one (yea, the principal) mark of a true visible church." And where the true doctrine and the true faith is maintained and professed, such errors as are vented and taught, to the prejudice and subversion of the same, must needs be disclaimed and condemned. Likewise, in order to the maintaining of the true doctrine and the true faith, it is not enough that the office-bearers of the church do hold forth the same doctrinally; the faith must be held forth judicially by the church-representative in their judicative capacity, 1 Tim. iii. 15. The question then is, If the present judicatories of this church maintain the true doctrine and the true faith, and if they have disclaimed and condemned such errors as have been vented among us to the prejudice and subversion of the same? Mr. C——e asserts, "That her standards of doctrine are pure, and that she allows of no errors in doctrine, p. 2." But tho' her standards of doctrines are pure, yet, if it is considered, how many dangerous errors have been vented, and after what manner they have been maintained and defended, and if the conduct and behaviour of the judicatories is impartially examined, it will be found to be a gross mistake, that the church, as represented in her present judicatories, *allows of no errors in doctrine*. And, to illustrate this, I make the following observes:

1st, A scheme of dangerous principles, vented and taught by Mr. Simson, was brought before the judicatories of this church in the first process commenced against him, whereby the federal representation of the first Adam, with many sacred truths connected therewith, were either expressly impugned or subtilly undermined.

2^{dly}, Mr S—n pled before the judicatories, That his pernicious principles were nowise inconsistent with our Confession of Faith, and that they were very agreeable to the scheme of divine truth laid down therein.

3^{dly}, Mr. S—n was dismissed from the process by the assembly 1717, without so much as a rebuke given him for venting such dangerous errors; likewise, that assembly never declared any of his errors to be contrary to the word of God. They observe in general, "That Mr. S—n hath adopted some hypotheses different from what are commonly used among orthodox divines, and that are not evidently founded on scripture, and tend to attribute too much to natural reason and the power of corrupt nature." They likewise observe, That he hath used some expressions that bear, and "are used by adversaries in, a bad and unsound sense, tho' he doth disown that unsound sense." It is to be regretted, that the cause of truth was managed after this manner. Mr. Simson's dangerous propositions, maintained by him in his defences, are called *expressions* and *hypotheses*. Again, they are not declared to be such as, in the obvious meaning and sense of the word, can only bear an unsound sense. Besides, they are only declared to be such hypotheses as are not evidently founded on the scripture; but none of them are found by the assembly to be contrary to the scripture. It is not said, they attribute too much to natural reason and the power of corrupt nature; but only that they tend to attribute too much, &c So very mild was that assembly to Mr. Simson: And, after all, one is left to conjecture, in the midst of a vast many propositions contained in his defences, what are these expressions and hypotheses that the assembly intended. Is this the way to maintain the true doctrine and the true faith held forth from the word of God in our Confession of Faith? Is it the way to disclaim and disallow errors in doctrine? And is not the sin of the present judicatories more highly aggravate when it is considered, that the assembly's committee, anno 1727, found that Mr. Simson continued to teach the very same principles? Yet, to this very day, the judicatories of

of this church have never told what is truth, what is error, in Mr. S—n's scheme, as it lies in the first process: They have never condemned any of his erroneous propositions maintained by him in his defences, as contrary to the word of God and our Confession of Faith; all is past over in silence to this very day. Likewise, when Mr. S—n is brought before the judicatories for impugning and denying the true Deity and necessary existence of our Lord Jesus, and the numerical oneness of the three adorable Persons, how did he trifle and quibble before the presbytery of Glasgow and the assembly's committee? Did he not maintain and assert the agreement of his doctrine with our Confession of Faith and Catechisms? And in the most liberal acknowledgement that he makes, and it is not made till he is driven unto it, he never makes confession that he had vented or taught any thing contrary to the word of God or our Confession of Faith. And, what is the conduct of judicatories in this important matter? There is no adequate censure inflicted upon him; yea, further, none of his blasphemous errors are expressly condemned, as contrary to the word of God and our Confession of Faith: Neither is the truth asserted in direct opposition unto the terms in which Mr. S—n made his insolent and bold attacks upon it. But Mr. C—e affirms, p. 117. That the assembly 1729 asserted plainly the *proper supreme Deity* of our Lord Jesus; and, p. 141. That they plainly, and in positive terms, assert the same. The words of the assembly, in their act suspending Mr. S—n (which Mr. C—e cites) are as follows, "The general assembly do observe with great pleasure and thankfulness, that God hath happily directed all the judicatories of this church which have had this process under their consideration, that there hath not appeared the least difference of sentiment: But, on the contrary, there hath been the most perfect and unanimous agreement among them, as to the doctrine of the glorious Trinity, and the *proper supreme Deity* of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, according as the same is revealed in the holy scriptures, and contained in our Confession of Faith and Catechisms." This is what Mr. C—e reckons a positive and plain asserting of the *proper supreme Deity* of the Son of God. But, as has been observed, the Deity of the Lord Jesus is not at all asserted in opposition to the terms in which it was impugned and denied by Mr. S—n. And further, if our Reverend brother had duly considered the shape in which the Arian scheme has come out in the present degenerate age, he might

might have known that our modern Arians will acknowledge a *proper supreme Deity* in the Person of the Son, in a consistency with their own scheme: As also, he might have known that Mr. Simson could have subscribed to the words of the assembly's act, according to his own sense and meaning of it, without disclaiming his darling proposition, That the terms, *Necessary existence, supreme Deity, and the title of the only true God, may be taken, and are by some authors taken, in a sense that includes the personal property of the Father, and so not belonging to the Son*; as also, in a consistency with what is contained in his first letter to the presbytery of Glasgow, That if the words *summus Deus* (or most high God) *were taken in such a latitude as to include the Father's personal property, as they are by some authors, they could not in that sense be truly affirmed of the Son*: Whence he concludes, That he might have said, when he read in Pictet, that *Christus est summus Deus*, it was to be understood *cum grano salis*. From what is said it is evident, that the present judicatories of this church have never particularly nor expressly condemned Mr. S—n's blasphemous propositions, as contrary to the word of God and our Confession of Faith.

With respect to Mr. Campbell's errors, many of them are particularly condescended upon in the judicial act and testimony: And, if it is owned that a scheme of dangerous principles has been vented by him, it cannot be refused that they have been brought to the bar of our judicatories, and that he has not been censured in the least; as also, that his gross and dangerous errors have never been condemned.

From what is above observed, the question is, If the present judicatories of this national church maintain the true doctrine and the true faith; and if they allow no errors in doctrine, even tho' many gross and dangerous errors have been brought to their bar, and not one of them have been particularly and expressly declared to be contrary to the word of God and our Confession of Faith, and tho' the broachers and venters of these errors have been dismissed, either without any censure at all, or without any censure proportioned unto the grievous scandal and offence they have given? And, when the question is thus stated, every unprejudiced person may judge, whether or not it can be affirmed of the present judicatories of this national church, that they maintain the true doctrine and the true faith, and that they allow of no errors in doctrine; and consequently, if they have a just
claim

claim and title to the first above mentioned note or mark of a true visible church, whereby she is distinguished, as the Confession expresses it, from the filthy synagogues.

The Reverend Mr. Currie alledges, page 26th "That
 " such who are licensed to preach the gospel, are solemnly
 " engaged to assert, maintain and defend the doctrine con-
 " tained in our excellent Confession of Faith; and also, that,
 " at their ordination, of new they come under the same en-
 " gagements, and do expressly disown all Popish, Arian, So-
 " cinian and other doctrines, ten-ets and opinions whatsoever,
 " which are contrary to and inconsistent with the foresaid
 " Confession of Faith." This is adduced by him to prove,
 that the present judicatories adhere to the doctrines contained
 in our excellent Confession of Faith: But I must tell him, it
 is one thing to sign an adherence to our Confession of Faith,
 and another thing to acknowledge the truths as they are laid
 down in our Confession of Faith; just as it is one thing to
 profess a belief of scripture truth, and another thing to
 believe and acknowledge the truth and genuine sense of the
 holy scriptures. The case stands plainly thus: Messieurs
 S—n and C—l have pled, That their doctrines are noway
 inconsistent with, but very agreeable to, our Confession of
 Faith; and the present judicatories, tho' they had their se-
 veral errors under their cognizance, have never expressly nor
 particularly condemned them as inconsistent with the said
 Confession: The question therefore is, Whether or not such as
 are licensed or ordained to the holy ministry may justly reckon,
 that they may warrantably sign our Confession, and make
 the above solemn declaration, in a consistency with their a-
 dopting Messieurs S—n and C—l's scheme; for this very
 reason, That the present judicatories, who require the said
 declaration and subscription, had these doctrines under their
 consideration, and have never found nor declared them in
 particular and express terms to be contrary to the doctrine
 held forth from the word of God in our Confession of Faith?
 Therefore, if Mr. C—e will manage the argument to pur-
 pose, he must prove, that, notwithstanding of what is above
 observed, the present judicatories of this national church
 maintain the true doctrine and the true faith; and that, not-
 withstanding of the above conduct and management of the
 judicatories, and the present state and situation of matters a-
 mongst us, the signing of our Confession is a satisfying evidence
 that the [subscribers disclaim and disown Messieurs S—n and
 C—l's principles. If our reverend brother or any other shall do
 this

this, they will do much to remove the ground of our secession, as it is stated upon the doctrine : But I do not expect to see it done, till our general assemblies shall do more than has been done, even by the general assembly 1736 in their act anent preaching, tho' it contains some good and excellent things.

The second note or mark of the true church of God, whereby she is discerned from the filthy synagogues, is, as Mr. C—e well observes from our first Confession of Faith, “ The right administration of the sacraments of Jesus Christ; which must be annexed unto the word and promise of God, to seal and confirm the same in our hearts.” And if it is enquired, When the sacraments are rightly administered? we are told in the same Confession, Art. 22d. “ That sacraments be rightly ministered, we judge two things are requisite; the one, that they be ministered by lawful ministers, whom we affirm to be only they that are appointed to the preaching of the word, into whose mouth God hath put some sermon of exhortation, they being men *lawfully chosen by some church*; the other, that they be ministered in such elements, and in such sort, as God hath appointed; else we affirm, that they cease to be right sacraments of Jesus Christ.” Mr. C—e cannot refuse, that there are many who have been intruded into the holy ministry, being men that were never lawfully chosen thereto by any church; and, according to the foresaid Confession, they are not lawful ministers, neither are the sacraments dispensed by them right ministered, yea, according to the said Confession, they are not right sacraments of Christ Jesus; and Mr. C—e cannot refuse, that the present judicatories support, protect and countenance such men in the exercise of their ministry, and in the dispensation of the sacraments, whom the Confession declares to be no lawful ministers of Christ: Therefore it may be surprising, that Mr. C—e, page 3d. in speaking of the second note of a true church, *viz.* the right administration of sacraments, should, without the least limitation or restriction, affirm, “ I think none can object against this, that the seals of God's covenant are as purely administered in this church as ever they were in any.”

The third note or mark of a true church is, “ Ecclesiastical discipline uprightly ministered as God's word prescribeth, whereby vice is repressed and virtue nourished.” Upon this Mr. —e, page 3d. says, “ I believe there is no church that hath a more exact form of process for discipline,

" pline, than now the church of Scotland hath." It does not belong to the present question to examine the truth of this assertion ; perhaps some good and weighty reasons might be advanced for a limitation and restriction, both of Mr. C—e's above assertion, as also on the words of that worthy author whom he cites immediately thereafter : But Mr. C—e still waves the true state of the question, whether of design, or because he has not duly considered this controversy, I shall not determine, tho' charity inclines me to the latter. The question that natively arises from the foresaid note and mark of a true church, contained in our Confession of Faith, is, Whether or not the present judicatories have a just claim and title to the same ? or, If ecclesiastical discipline is uprightly administrate amongst them whereby vice is repressed and virtue nourished ? Suppose the church of Scotland had acts and rules for discipline more exact than any church ever had since the apostles days, What is this to the present case ? If her present judicatories, are, notwithstanding of these excellent acts and rules, abusing and perverting the keys, and exercising a lordly and tyrannical power over the heritage of God ; then it is certain, that ecclesiastical discipline is not uprightly administrate amongst them. This is what the seceding brethren have affirmed and they have stated it as one of the grounds of their secession from the present judicatories in their first testimony wherein they have instructed and proven the above charge both from the acts of assembly 1733 against the protesting ministers, and the presbytery of Dunfermline, whereby unwarrantable terms of ministerial and Christian communion are imposed upon the ministers and members of this church ; as also, from a tract and series of violence done to the heritage of God, by the intrusion of ministers upon them, and from the magisterial and arbitrary procedure of church judicatories in such violent settlements.

Mr. C—e never acknowledges any such thing as tyranny in the government or in the administration of discipline : He says, " If sometimes discipline should not be exercised as it ought, " that's not defended by the church," Essay page 3d. And he is, " sorry ever such a sentence was past, whereby the " *four brethren* were cast out from the communion of this " church," Page 28th. Likewise he says, He cannot approve of the sentence casting them out ; yet he knows not but there may be truth in what a worthy minister of Christ wrote him, " I should never have advised my worthy brother Mr.

" Erskine

" Erskine to have made any confession of a fault, even in his
 " expressions, when his conscience justified him in the same:
 " But I cannot think that his silence at the time that either
 " the synod or the general assembly rebuked him, when
 " they resolved thereby to finish the process, would be con-
 " sidered an acknowledgment of a fault." But, in the review
 of the committee of commission's narrative, it is made evi-
 dent, that his silence in the above case would have been a
 dissembling with the judicatories, and a departing from his
 testimony. Mr. C—e, page 29th, affirms, " But, when it is
 " granted that sentence was unjust and tyrannical, it will not
 " prove the church of Scotland is so tyrannical that she
 " ought to be separated from; for he is not a tyrant who is
 " guilty of a few acts of oppression, but he who is habitual-
 " ly guilty of them in his administration. A tyrant, says Ru-
 " therford, *Lex Rex*, page 217. *is he who habitually sins a-*
 " *gainst the catholic good of the subjects and state, and subvert-*
 " *eth law* : And I think none will say, the church of Scot-
 " land is habitually guilty of tyranny and intolerable per-
 " secution, whether of soul or body." But I ask Mr. C—e,
 may not a church be habitually guilty of ecclesiastic tyranny,
 tho' she does not stir up the civil powers to heading and
 hanging? I ask him again, Whether or not the intrusion of
 ministers upon dissenting and reclaiming congregations, is an
 act of tyranny and oppression upon the souls of men? or, to
 use some of his own expressions as they ly in his other writ-
 ings, Whether or not it is an act of tyranny on the souls of
 men, to deprive the Lord's people of one of their valuable
 rights and privileges purchased for them by the blood of the
 Redeemer, *viz.* the election of their own ministers? Mr.
 C—e may very well know, that the seceding brethren have
 never stated their secession upon a few acts of tyranny in the
 administration, whereby the judicatories of the church have
 been for many years bypast ruling over the heritage of God
 with rigour, and by their magisterial and arbitrary proceed-
 ings have been breaking down our Presbyterian constitution :
 And, according to the above description of a tyrant that he
 gives us from Rutherford, the present judicatories have been
 sinning against the catholic good of the subjects of Christ, and
 subverting the laws of his spiritual kingdom; unless he'll
 affirm, that the catholic good of his subjects is not affected
 by the settlement of ministers, and that the laws of Christ's

kingdom are not subverted by the magisterial proceedings of the judicatories.

But, says Mr. C—e, p. 30. when speaking of violent intrusions, A considerable struggle hath been made by many ministers of this church against them, *a considerable stop hath been put to them for some time bygone*. One may be surprised to see Mr. C—e writing and publishing to the world (to give it no worse name) such a gross mistake. Tho' the assembly 1734 did not pursue the violent measures of former assemblies, yet, did not both the assemblies 1735 and 1736 return unto them? And he cannot be ignorant of the decision of the last assembly in the affair of Denny, tho' providence stopt the execution of that most arbitrary sentence. How then, can he affirm that a stop, yea, a considerable stop, has been put to violent intrusions for some time bygone, when the contrary is evident to every one who owns that the settlement of ministers over dissenting and reclaiming congregations is a violent intrusion upon them?

The seceding ministers have always alledged, and I humbly judge upon good grounds, that, by the above acts of assembly anno 1733, new and unwarrantable terms of ministerial and Christian communion are imposed upon the ministers and members of this church. It is needless to enter upon the proof of this, since it is done already in the several papers that have been emitted by the foresaid ministers: But it may be proper to notice, that Mr. C—e has done nothing to enervate any of the arguments and proofs that they have brought; he does not positively refuse that the sentences past against the protesting ministers did impose sinful and unwarrantable terms of ministerial communion. Yet I must observe, with all deference unto him, that in his way of reasoning he trifles exceedingly; as for instance, when he tells us, p. 181. "That these sentences were not sinful terms of communion to all the ministers of this church, for they respected the *four brethren* allenarly:" As if an act imposing sinful terms of communion, tho' directed immediately against *four ministers*, did not equally extend to all the members of the same political body. But that which Mr. C—e chiefly insists upon is, That the act 1733, past against the foresaid ministers, was materially rescinded by the powers granted to the synod of Perth and Stirling by the assembly 1734, and by what the synod did thereupon; and therefore he thinks that the brethren should have returned to the judicatories, and that they should

should testify in a way of communion with them ; and that, if the foresaid act 1733 contained any sinful terms of communion, the said act being materially rescinded, this ground of secession falls to the ground : On the above things he insists from p. 165. to 178. But yet Mr. C---e never so much as toucheth upon the principal and chief grounds upon which the brethren have argued, That the sentences past against them were never either formally or materially repealed. I shall only observe, that, p. 165. at the close, he pretends to give one of their reasons from the paper intituled, Reasons by Messieurs Ebenezer Erskine, &c. why they have not acceded to the judicatories of the church ; and he lays it as a citation from p. 23. of the said paper in the following terms, " In vindication of their not acceding upon what was done " by that assembly, and foresaid synod 1734, it is complain- " ed, *That the assembly did not themselves judge of the lega- " lity of the sentences pronounced against the brethren as they " ought, seeing the synod could not do this.*" I have not seen mens words more miserably perverted and torn asunder ; he makes us to write the most unintelligible stuff, he seems to me not to have understood what he was attempting to confute : And therefore I must lay the reasons of their not acceding at large, as they ly in the above-mentioned page ; and they are as follow,

1mo, " The assembly 1734 in the above act refuse to en- " quire into the steps of proceeding taken by the several judi- " catories under whose consideration the case of the *four* " *brethren* hath been, that is, they plainly declare that they " will not so much as enter upon the consideration of the " act of assembly 1733, or the conduct of their commission " in consequence thereof : Can it then be said that they have " in any shape whatsoever repealed the said act ? But this " will appear further, if it is considered,

" 2do, That the assembly 1734 peremptorily discharge " the synod of Perth and Stirling to judge of the legality or " formality of the proceedings of the church judicatories " in relation to this affair, or either to approve or censure " the same ; from whence it is plain, that the act of assem- " bly 1733, and the proceedings of the judicatories there- " upon, are noway affected by the act of assembly 1734, " either as to their legality or formality : For tho' it might " be alledged that a synod cannot regularly judge of, ap- " prove or condemn an act of assembly, such as the act 1733

“ certainly is ; yet no reasonable objection can be made why
 “ the assembly 1734 could not have judged of the legality
 “ and formality of the act of the former assembly, and the
 “ proceedings of the judicatories thereupon . And then in
 “ that case there would have been a clear ground for the
 “ synod to have judged and declared that the act 1733, and
 “ the proceedings of the judicatories in consequence of it,
 “ had been found *illegal* and *informal* by the assembly 1734.”

But Mr. C—e has set his thumb upon the above as well as other reasons that are adduced by the brethren in the fore-said paper to prove that the sentences past against them were never materially rescinded. But, not to insist upon this, the case with reference to the ejection of the four ministers stands thus ; when they came before the commission August 1733, in consequence of the act and sentence of the preceding assembly, they not only adhered to their protestation and testimony given in to that assembly, but in their several representations given in to the commission they enlarged their testimony, and stated the same both upon the proceedings of judicatories in Mr. Simson’s case, as also upon other palpable and hainous steps of defection ; and they were thrust out by the commission November 1733 with this testimony in their hands : The question then is, If the brethren could return to the judicatories upon what the synod of Perth and Stirling did by vertue of their delegated power and authority, without giving up with the testimony that was in their hands, when their guilt and crime was upon the matter still affirmed, and the execution of the sentence past against them only averted upon some political considerations ; and especially when a particular testimony for truth, in opposition to the errors of the time, is not to this very day lifted up by the judicatories of the church ?

As for the act with reference to the presbytery of Dunfermline, it is affirmed, Essay, p. 34. That “ the assembly
 “ 1735 allowed some of these parishes, who had pastors
 “ thrust in upon them, a liberty of church-privileges where-
 “ ever they might have freedom to ask them ; which was a
 “ material testimony against intrusions.” And, p. 173 “ As
 “ to the act of assembly 1733 anent some brethren in the
 “ presbytery of Dunfermline, that act is materially rescind-
 “ ed, in regard the assembly having left it to the synod of
 “ Fife to do in the affair of Kinross (anent which that act

“ was

“ was made) as to the admitting of that people to partake of
 “ church-privileges wherever they should think fit; the
 “ synod of Fife did upon this allow that people to have the
 “ benefit of church privileges wherever they should think
 “ meet to ask them.” Here I must notice, that it is not
 matter of fact that the assembly 1735 allowed any of the
 parishes who had men thrust in upon them a liberty of church-
 privileges wherever they might have freedom to ask them;
 That assembly did indeed remit the case of some of these pa-
 rishes to the synods concerned, with this express qualification,
 That the synods should do what they found most for edifica-
 tion: And in the very same manner they refer the case about
 the enrolment of the intruders in some of these parishes to the
 respective synods. If that assembly had designed a material
 testimony against intrusions, as they would not have allow-
 ed the synods to enrol intruders, so they would have by them-
 selves given the people the privilege of sealing ordinances
 from faithful and sent ministers; and, if they had designed
 any material rescinding of the act, they would never have
 qualified their remit in the manner above mentioned; they
 would have declared, that it was for the edification of the
 body of Christ that the oppressed members should have gos-
 pel-ordinances administrate unto them by ministers lawfully
 called. Besides, when the synod concerned have thought fit
 to allow them the benefit of sealing ordinances from neigh-
 bouring ministers, it amounts to no more than this, That
 they pity the weakness or wilfulness of the people who will
 not submit to ministers set over them by mere church autho-
 rity: And, when they consider that a secession is declared
 from the judicatories on account of their arbitrary proceed-
 ings, and that the people will have the benefit of sealing or-
 dinances from the seceding ministers, they choose rather to
 allow them to receive them from their neighbouring mini-
 sters. And this is the plain meaning of what is reckoned
 most for edification, according to the assembly’s remit; and
 every unprejudiced person may judge, if in all this there is
 any material testimony against intrusions, or any rescinding
 of that act of assembly 1733 anent some ministers in the pre-
 bytery of Dunfermline.

From all this above-represented, it is very much to be re-
 gretted that there is so much reason and ground for drawing
 the following conclusion, viz. That the present judicatories

of this national church, on account of their proceedings in the many gross doctrinal errors that have been brought to their bar, as also in regard of a series and tract of magisterial, lordly and tyrannical proceedings in the administration of the government and discipline of the Lord's house, together with the countenance that they give to the dispensation of the word and sacraments by these who are not lawfully chosen thereunto, have not a just claim to the notes and marks of a true church that are given in our first Confession of Faith, whereby, as the said confession speaks, the church is discerned from the *filthy synagogues*, viz. the true preaching of the word, or the maintainance of the true doctrine and the true faith, the right administration of the sacraments and ecclesiastical discipline uprightly administered as God's word prescribeth; and consequently we cannot receive and embrace these judicatories, or, which is the same thing, we cannot warrantably join in ministerial communion with them.

Likewise, from what is above-represented, we may see against whom the charge of *schism* or *separation* is to be laid. And here I shall only make use of the words of Mr. Rutherford as they are cited by Mr. C——e; "When the greatest part of a church makes defection from the truth, the lesser part remaining sound, the greatest part is the church of *separatists*," *Due Right*, p. 225 *Essay* p. 16. Mr. C——e seems to be jealous lest this citation make against him, therefore he gives his commentary upon it; "Surely he means (*viz.* Mr. Rutherford) of declared defections from the truth in fundamentals." And, to prove this, he cites another paragraph from Mr. Rutherford. But, whatever is Mr. Rutherford's meaning, surely it is a weighty and grave question, What are fundamental points, and what not? Our divines have been very cautious and wary in determining in this important question, yet it is generally agreed amongst sound divines, that the true deity of the Son of God is a fundamental article of faith; but how this foundation truth has been treated by the present judicatories has been already observed.

This leads me to notice some just remarks of the reverend committee of the assembly anno 1727, upon the 7th article of the second libel exhibited against Mr. Simson, as the said remarks ly in their excellent paper containing the grounds why they judge the several articles of the forsaide libel relevant: The seventh article of libel is, *That, were it not for the*

the prospect of happiness, we could not, and therefore would not serve God. State of the processes, p. 277. Upon which the committee amongst other things observe, that " what is " set forth in this article is contrary to the instinct of the new " nature the Lord endueth all his people with in regenerati- " on." They add: " Considering how much all men are " bound to make the glory of God their chief end, tho' yet " they are called herewith to pursue happiness; and that like- " wise it is through a prevailing respect to God's honour " and glory, and not a mere or chief respect to our own " happiness, that the difference betwixt nature and grace is " to be cleared to the doubtful christian:" They farther ob- serve, " That Mr. S——n in his defences only allows the " seeking after God's glory as it conduceth to our happiness, " which (say they) is a sacrificing all to the idol of ourselves, " going only the length of *foolish virgins*, who may de- " sire *oil of grace* for the sake of their own happiness, and " that they may enter into heaven." If it is so, that a doc- trinal point was before the judicatories of this church, by which the difference betwixt nature and grace is to be clear- ed to the doubtful christian, and if an error contrary to the instinct of that new nature which the Lord endueth all his people with in regeneration, and which sacrificeth all unto the idol of ourselves, then a fundamental error, or an error striking at the vitals of practical religion, was brought to their bar; consequently the judicatories of this church, in passing this, together with Mr. Simson's other errors contain- ed in the second libel, without any testimony against them, have let go a foundation-point, or they have let an error striking at the foundations pass without any testimony against it. Further, I judge it will not be refused, that Mr. Camp- bell's principle about self-love and self interest is the same up- on the matter with Mr. Simson's, as it is laid in the above article: And, if it is true that the general assembly 1736 have adopted Mr. Campbell's principle, as the seceding bre- thren alledge in their judicial act and testimony (and they have given such reasons for this as Mr. C——e has not yet disproven) then it may be justly concluded, that an error which strikes at the vitals of practical religion has been a- dopted by that assembly. And what tho' it is true that some worthy and godly men did not see into the true meaning of the said act with reference to Mr. Campbell, yet it is still an act of assembly, and it must be taken in the genuine sense

and meaning of the words compared with Mr. Campbell's principles. I do not think when Mr. C——e took the field that he had the least thought the dispute would have run so deep; and I doubt not but other questions of considerable importance will cast up when we come to engage more closely in the present controversy.

The reverend Mr. C——e is the first that has appeared upon the field against the judicial act and testimony, except an anonymous writer in a paper published under the title of *A seasonable testimony*, &c. As to this paper I shall only observe, That the seventeen queries contained in the second part thereof are all taken out of the above-mentioned narrative of the commission published *anno* 1733, except the two last of the said queries, and most of them are laid in the words of the narrative; yet the author is neither so candid nor fair as to declare so much: And, as he takes no manner of notice of what was said by the seceding brethren in the Review of the said Narrative, so in the other parts of that paper he never once enters into the argument, tho' in the part he calls Serious Expostulations, he pours out a flood of words, commending peace and unity, which are most desirable when they have truth for their cement and foundation; therefore I humbly judge the seceding brethren had no manner of reason to take notice of it, tho' it was commended by some who it seems take words for reason and argument.

I shall now conclude this postscript with a few general remarks on the reverend Mr. C——e's essay.

1. In order to discredit the judicial act and testimony of the associate presbytery, he does what he can to defame and blacken the assemblies of our last reforming period. I humbly judge the brethren said enough with respect to what was defective in that period, when they express themselves thus in their judicial act and testimony, p. 18. "But, since the church while militant is in an imperfect state, it is not hereby intended to affirm, that under the above mentioned period (*viz.* from 1638 to 1649) there was nothing defective or wanting as to the beauty and order of the house of God, or that there was nothing culpable in the administration: All that is designed by the above particular deduction is to declare, that the church endeavoured, and mercifully attained, a considerable pitch of reformation during the foregoing period. Towards this their several contendings and wrestlings, their solemn vows and engagements, their declarations

"clarations and testimonies all pointed." But Mr. C—e is not satisfied with the above declaration, and therefore every where in his Essay he loads the assemblies of the above-mentioned period with most unwarrantable and odious proceedings. I know not what cause he has served by his labours this way, unless it is that of the Prelatists on the one hand, and of the Sectarians on the other, who will readily applaud his performance as excellent: I hope a more just, more full and fair character of that period may be drawn in due time. I shall only touch at the treatment which he gives the famous assembly 1638, and particularly an act (as he terms it) past on the 17th of December: I know not how oft it is mentioned, as p. 20, 33, &c. and, when he is brought to any pinch, he throws it up for his relief. That which he points at is the 17th article of a large and excellent act; and, whereas Mr. C—e thinks fit to mention only the last clause of the said article, it is necessary in order to do justice to that assembly, and to undeceive the reader, that I transcribe the whole, and it is as follows, "Whereas the Confession of the Faith of
 "this kirk, concerning both doctrine and discipline, so often
 "called in question by the corrupt judgment and tyrannous
 "authority of the pretended Prelates, is now clearly explain-
 "ed, and by this whole kirk, represented by this general as-
 "sembly, concluded, ordained also to be subscribed by all sorts
 "of persons within the said kirk and kingdom: The assembly
 "constitutes and ordains, that from henceforth no sort of per-
 "son, of whatsoever quality and degree, be permitted to
 "speak or write against the said Confession, this assembly, or
 "any act of this assembly, and that under the pain of incur-
 "ring the censures of this kirk." This is the act of assembly that Mr. Currie represents in the most odious manner, and which he insinuates is a most tyrannical act, and which he alleges restricts ministerial freedom more than the act 1733; yea, he challenges all the Separatists, as he terms them, *to instance an act since that time more unreasonable than this*, p. 41. I am grieved to see one of his character writing at this rate. This famous assembly was ordered to rise by the king's commissioner, and they continued notwithstanding to sit and to do their business, whereby they gave a large practical testimony to the headship and sovereignty of the Lord Jesus over his own spiritual kingdom; they explained and confirmed the Confession of Faith, concerning both doctrine and discipline, in opposition unto the corrupt judgment and tyrannous authority

city of the pretended Prelates, as the above article declares; they condemned Prelacy, and the five articles of Perth, and deposed the pretended Prelates, as their acts bear. In regard they were ordered to dissolve by the king's commissioner, therefore the constitution of this assembly, and consequently the validity of their proceedings, were impugned at this time only by a malignant generation, open and declared enemies to the Lord's work: On this account, in the above article they assert their just authority, and the validity of their proceedings, which they had good reason to do. The judicatories of the church can do nothing against the truth; but when their acts and proceedings are for the maintainance and support of truth, they may justly appoint ecclesiastical censures to be inflicted upon the malignant opposers of their acts and proceedings, whether by word or writ; and this is all that is done by the fore said assembly in the above article: Must therefore a reforming assembly be defamed, to support the credit of a deforming assembly, or at least to extenuate the sinful and unwarrantable proceedings of the assembly 1733? Or, shall the one be compared with the other? What is said in the close of the above article must be connected with the first part of it, and it plainly respects the honest and zealous endeavours of this assembly to vindicate their constitution as warrantable, and their proceedings as valid, in asserting and maintaining our doctrine and discipline in opposition to the tyranny and corruption of the perfidious Prelates.

2. In order to discredit the judicial act and testimony, he appears to me to extenuate the sins and defections of the present period. Tho' he acknowledges, Chap. 3. some things wrong amongst us that are ground of mourning; yet he does not make an acknowledgement of a habitual tract of tyranny and oppression upon the Lord's heritage: Yea, according to him, tho' sundry persons be leavened with gross errors in the church of Scotland at this day, "yet it is unaccountable to charge the church of Scotland as favourers of these errors," p. 18. I shall not charge the church of Scotland with favouring errors: But yet the seceding brethren may justly charge the present judicatories with protecting, supporting and countenancing errors, and that because they have neither testified particularly nor expressly against them, neither have they inflicted due censure upon the erroneous, tho' brought to their bar.

3. Mr. C—e argues against our secession from the present judicatories, from the practice of the prophets under the Old Testament,

Testament, who, notwithstanding of the gross corruptions amongst the priests, never separated from the church and temple-worship; and from the practice of our blessed Lord, who, notwithstanding of the manifold corruptions of the Jewish church in his time, attended the temple-worship, and ordered his disciples to do so, p. 39, 40. Tho' this reasoning is very frequent, yet, if it prove any thing at all, it proves too much, and more than Mr. Currie himself will own; namely, that we ought to submit to ordinances dispensed by such as are grossly immoral in their practice. But Mr. Currie, p. 35. says he's much of this opinion, "That such as are evidently scandalous may be withdrawn from; albeit, thro' the iniquity of the times, they should not be censured by a church judicatory when complained of." But, with reference to the above argument, we are to consider, that the church visible was confined unto one nation under the Old Testament dispensation, and that now the visible catholic church under the gospel, "is not confined to one nation as before under the law, but consists of all those thro'out the world that profess the true religion, and of their children," Con. ch. 25. §. 2. As the prophets, Christ and his apostles, did not separate from the catholic visible church, but observed the temple-worship and ordinances; so it is one thing to depart from a particular, provincial or national church, on account of their corruptions, and another thing to separate from the catholic visible church. If the prophets and disciples of Christ attended the Old Testament altar and temple-worship, so I hope those that depart from ministerial communion with the present judicatories, on account of their defections, do, notwithstanding, cleave to our New Testament Altar Christ Jesus, and to the gospel-ordinances and institutions, viz. word, sacraments, and discipline, which are given primarily to the church catholic visible. Mr. Currie argues, p. 40. "But, if it be a sin to join in communion with a church having corruptions, or whose pastors are not what they ought to be, then it would follow, that the Lord's people under the Old Testament were under a necessity of sinning, either by forsaking of God's ordinances, or by joining with corrupt men in a church with many corruptions; or that the same moral action which was lawful then would be sinful in us now.—If so be the presence of wicked men defile the worship to the godly, then they had been bound to withdraw from the church, even under the Old Testament, altho' there had been no other church to

" join

"join with." But the whole of the above reasoning proceeds upon this gross mistake, as if the seceding brethren affirmed that the sins of fellow-worshippers polluted and defiled the ordinances to others. This is a principle maintained by the rigid Brownists and other sectaries; and it is a principle justly opposed by Mr. Rutherford in his *Due Right and Peaceable Plea*, as also by other great men whom Mr. Currie names in his Essay; and they manage the argument with good success from the Old Testament church, against the above principle. But, as this is not a principle maintained by any of the seceding brethren, viz. That the sins of fellow-worshippers pollute and defile the worship, or that the sins of a fellow communicant pollute that ordinance to others; so their secession is not founded upon any such principle or bottom: Yet they judge a secession from the present judicatories warrantable and necessary on many other grounds and reasons, namely, that it is necessary in order to their *holding fast that which they have received*, Rev. ii. 25. necessary in order unto their *standing fast in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made them free*, Gal v. 1. necessary in order unto a suitable testimony against a course of defection and backsliding, Rom. xvi. 17. a necessary mean likewise of conviction to a corrupt and backsliding party, 2 Thess. iii. 14. as also necessary in order to maintain and keep up a testimony for truth, and for transmitting the same pure and uncorrupted to posterity. On these and many such considerations, a secession from some particular churches, that are degenerate and corrupt, may be necessary duty.

4. Mr. Currie, in order to rub upon the conduct of the seceding brethren, and to discredit their testimony, endeavours to make them inconsistent with themselves, in citations that he brings from some papers published by them many years ago: Thus he frequently cites a paper published by my reverend brother Mr. Moncrieff, I think about twenty years ago, tho' there is a vast difference betwixt the situation of the church of Scotland then and now. I humbly judge this is a low and mean way of arguing, and unworthy of any fair and ingenuous disputant: How does it support Mr. Currie's cause, tho' he should prove all the brethren inconsistent with themselves in their former writings (which he has not done as yet with respect to any one of them) unless he can prove that they are wrong now? If I should alledge and prove, that, when Mr. Currie affirms p. 29. that the church of Scotland is not habitually guilty of tyranny, that he is inconsistent with himself

in his other writings concerning the right of the Christian people to choose their own ministers, I should thereby rub upon Mr. Currie; but it would by no means strengthen the cause I plead for, or support my argument.

5. Mr. Currie thro' his Essay jumbles together the judicial act and testimony emitted by the Associate presbytery, and a book called *Plain Reasons*: His design is obvious and plain; but, as the seceding brethren have no concern in that book, so I have taken no manner of notice of it.

6. He thinks fit to publish a great many private stories and hearlays: These are scattered thro' his book, with an evident design to defame the conduct of the brethren, and to discredit their judicial act and testimony; as preface, p. 12, 13, &c. As this is an unmanly way of managing a cause; so I hope, if the seceding brethren shall think fit to give any reply to this bulky performance, that they will never be so mean and low as to rake into such dunghills.

7. I am heartily sorry for that bitterness of spirit that I see breathing thro'out the whole of this Essay. Whatever contempt Mr. Currie may pour upon the seceding brethren, and whatever hard names he may think fit to bestow upon them, I wish he had treated the cause and testimony they hold with more of meekness and fear: He seems to be confident (pref. p. 12.) that, upon reading his book, his readers may see that there is a good deal more to be said in vindication of the church of Scotland, and against separation from her, than some of them imagined, namely, such as are much disobliged already at some for not joining the seceding brethren; yet I doubt not but the seceding brethren have very much likewise to say for themselves, and I'm sorry they have so much to say: I sincerely wish that matters were otherwise stated in the present judicatories of this national church, and that there were no such grounds of secession from them. Our reverend brother has given sufficient ground and matter of irritation, from the way and manner whereby he has managed the argument. Every one of us have much reason to be jealous over our own spirits: Therefore I pray, that our contentings upon this subject may be only and singly for truth, and that they may be governed with a disposition and temper of spirit becoming the gospel of Christ; and let truth have the victory, and let God have all the glory.

Perth, May 15.

1738:

WILLIAM WILSON.

F I N I S.

